

FOURTEEN *E. 12.31*
SERMONS
PREACH'D,
A T
St. JAMES's CHURCH
IN
WESTMINSTER.

By CHARLES HICKMAN.
D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to
His Majesty, and Domestick
Chaplain to the Earl of Ro-
chester.

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TO THE
Right Honourable
LAWRENCE
Earl of *ROCHESTER*.

May it please your Lordship,

BY the great Favour
and Bounty which I
receiv'd from your
Lordship in your House, I
had the opportunity to com-
pose these following Discour-
ses, for the benefit of a very
Honourable, and Nume-
rous Congregation; where
A 2 they

Epistle Dedicatory.

they were heard with Favour, and therefore I hope also with Effect: And that the Effect may prove more General, I have been prevail'd upon to make them Publick. I was the more easily perswaded to it, because it gave me an occasion of making this publick acknowledgment, of my Gratitude, and Obligations to your Lordship, under whose Protection I have long liv'd, and hope these Discourses will live longer: Especially if your Lordship will be pleas'd to treat Them, as you have
al-

Epistle Dedicatory:

always done their Author,
with Candour and Genero-
sity, and pardon a weak
Performance, for the sake of
a good Intention: And my
Intention in them was, to
give the World, (at least that
part of the World which I
have had the Honour to In-
struct) a right notion of
Religion in General; and
a just character of those Car-
dinal Vertues which support
it: Without descending to
those Particular points
which Divide it: Being ful-
ly perswaded, that the fixing
of these important Prin-
ciples in the minds of

Epistle Dedicatory.

Men, will effectually secure them in the Profession of that Faith, which is Reveal'd to us in the Gospel, and the observance of that Discipline, which is Establish'd in the Church of *England*: And that nothing but Vice makes Men deny our Creed, and nothing but superstition makes them forsake our Communion. For this reason I have endeavour'd to represent Religion in its Native Simplicity, and to set it in its proper light; neither Clouded by Moroseness, nor Glaring with Affectation: And to shew Ver-
tue

Epistle Dedicatory.

se- tue in such a dress, as may
fes- prove it to be, not only an
ich- Amiable, but a Practicable
Go- thing ; neither encumber'd
of- with Pageantry, nor Cloak'd
E- with Dissimulation, but con-
of- tented with its own proper
ng- Ornaments, which God and
ny- Nature have fitted for it,
out- and Art can never imitate.
or- This, my Lord, has been
or- my Design ; though I am
ou- conscious of many defects
on- in the Performance. But
nd- for what is wanting in my
t ; Book , I shall make the
se- Reader amends in my De-
f- dication, by directing him
r- to your Lordship, for a li-
ue- ving

Epistle Dedicatory.

ving Instance, and a more lively Idea of those eminent Vertues, which I have endeavour'd to describe: That unaffected *Goodness*, and untainted *Greatness*; that unbiased *Sincerity*, and uncorrupted *Integrity*, which Envy it self cannot deny your Lordship the Honour of. But above all, that immoveable Zeal for the true Religion, that unconquerable Affection for the Establish'd Church, whereby your Lordship has Constantly, and Strenuously, and Successfully asserted her Cause, even in the worst of Times;
and

Epistle Dedicatory.

and inseparably espous'd
Her interests, to the appa-
rent diminution of your
Own; and given the World
so glorious an Example, both
of a *Patriot*, and a *Confessor*,
as I am sure this Age can-
not Equal, and I hope, by
your Lordships Endeavours,
the next age will not want.
This is what the professed
Enemies of our Church, to
their sorrow, Know, and are
afraid of; and it is a shame
to her pretended Friends,
if they will not Know it,
and be thankful. But your
Lordships Actions shew
you to be as much above
the

Epistle Dedicatory.

the affectation of Publick Applause, as the Consideration of Private Interest: So much above it, that I know I shall incur your Lordships Displeasure for having said *so much* ; though you must give me leave to beg pardon of the World for saying *no more*.

That your Lordship may long Live and Prosper, for the Good of both Church and State : And that your Posterity, which God has given you so happy a prospect of, may Inherit your Vertues , and be

Epistle Dedicatory.

ck be Enrich'd with all the
ra- Blessings of Heaven and
So Earth, Is the constant Pray-
I er of,

MY LORD,

Your Lordships most

Dutiful and most

Faithful Servant,

and Chaplain.

C H. HICKMAN.

THE

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S E R-

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T H E

The Reader is desir'd to Correct these
few Errours, and to forgive the rest.

Pag. 8. line 3. for *upon*, read *into*.

Pag. 21. line 6. for *Professors*, read *Profession*.

Pag. 65. line 15. for *him*, read *them*.

Pag. 279. line 3. blot out *in*.

Pag. 319. for *were many*, read *and many*.

JOB

J O B XXVIII. 28.

*And unto man be said, the fear of
the Lord that is wisdom, and
to depart from evil is under-
standing.*

Wisdom, and Understand-
ing, are things which
all men are apt to value
themselves upon; and
they who value them-
selves the most, have commonly the
least reason for it: These are indeed the
most excellent accomplishments of Man,
and yet few Men understand wherein
the true excellency of them consists.

Some think themselves very wise if
they can but look *deeper* than other Men,
and search out the nature of those things
that

that are uncommon, and abstruse : Others think themselves very understanding if they can but look *farther* than other Men, and take in a wide compass of things that are remote and insignificant : Whereas indeed the only way to excel in Wisdom is to look *higher* than other Men, to make Heaven the Object of our Contemplation ; and Religion, the Rule of our life : And in this pious disposition of mind, to have the Fear of God always in our Hearts, and the Law of God always before our Eyes.

This is what *Job* teaches us expressly in my Text, and drives at in the whole foregoing Chapter, where having run through a most lively, elegant Description of the several mistaken ways of this world, he concludes all with this remark, That pure Religion is the only thing that is either capable of being known, or worthy to be desired by Man.

He tells us we may dive into the greatest depths, and range to the utmost bounds of Nature, and yet be never the wiser when we have done : We may exercise, and baffle our Reason too,
in

Sermon First.

3

in weighing of the winds and measuring of the waters, in searching out the decree for rain, and tracing the ways of thunder, and yet all our study shall be as cloudy as the Air, and as uncertain as either Winds or Waters, and our own vanity and ignorance is the only discovery that we shall make.

We may dig for Truth in the bowels of the Earth, and there search for Treasures too, *in the stones of darkness and the shadow of death; we may descend into the path which no fowl knoweth, and the Vultures eye hath not seen: Where the veins of Silver take their course, and the Pearls and Sapphires make their beds.* There we may think to enrich our Minds, and our Bodies too; to gratifie both our Curiosity, and our Covetousness at once, and come up laden with Treasures of Knowledge, and Mines of Wealth: And after all, we shall find that our hopes are deceitful, our labour is all in vain, and neither the speculation nor the purchase is worth our while.

For Wisdom is not to be found in the heights above, nor in the depths below: Happiness depends not upon Gold,

B 2

and

and Silver and precious Stones, these things may dazel the eyes, and puzzle the brains, of weak injudicious Men; confound us to find them out, and distract us when they are found, and for that reason God has plac'd them out of sight, that we might neither set our Heads nor our Hearts upon them. But unto Man he said, *The fear of the Lord that is wisdom*, &c. From whence 'tis natural and obvious to observe, that Religion, which in the language of the Scripture is always understood by the name of Wisdom, consists of these two essential parts.

1. The Fear of God : And,
2. A departing from evil.

And the use I shall make of this Observation in my following Discourse, is to give you from thence a true Notion what Religion is, and to shew by what Marks and Characters the true Religion is to be known: a very important Subject, and one would think it very easie too. But how plain soever it may be of its self; yet the perverseness of contentious sinful Men has made it a great question now, and not very easie to be determin'd.

For

For tho' God has revealed his will to Man, at sundry times, and in divers manners ; yet different Men, according to the diversity of their Lusts, their Interests, or their Apprehensions, have taken this Revelation in a diverse meaning, and sometimes in so perverse a sense, that nothing is so unlike the will of God, as the notion which some Men have of godliness : nothing in the world is so irreligious, as the profession of some Mens religion. *Light and darknes, bitter and sweet, good and evil*, though they are all equally distinguishable, and all equally contrary to each other, as the Prophet tells us, yet they are not more contrary than one Man's Religion is to anothers.

Now which of these is Pure and True, has always been, and is always like to be a strong debate : and what is worse than this, when Men contend for their religion, out of any other design, than to promote *the fear of God and to depart from evil*, when either their Lusts, or their Interests mix themselves with the concerns of their Faith, the debate commonly runs so high, that Prejudice

and Passion blind their Eyes, and hinder them from discovering the truth.

Nay, what is worst of all, in the heat of such contentions, the perverseness and peevishness of Man is apt, sometimes to over-look, and sometimes to over-throw the essential duties of Religion, and while they dispute about forms, and terms, they destroy the very substance of the Faith.

Hence it is that we see not only single Men, but whole Nations, and Churches too, advancing the interest (as they call it) of their Religion, by such means, as shew that their Religion is nothing else but interest: That they have not *the fear of God* before their Eyes, and *to depart from evil* was never in their Hearts; but in a false zeal they carry on an evil Cause, without either Fear, or Understanding.

And this is the present State of Religion in the world; it was never disputed more, and never practis'd less: It was never more talk'd of, and never less understood: and for the most part they who are most hot and zealous in their
Pro-

Professions, are most negligent in their lives: They who talk most of the *fear of God*, take the least care to *depart from evil*.

When heats and passions have rais'd such a dust about the Truth, 'tis hard to see it through the Cloud: when prejudice and contention have perplex'd the Cause, and distracted the minds of Men, if we would set our judgments right, and know which is the true Religion, we must trace Religion back to its original, and judge of its truth according to its conformity with the first Principles of Reason.

The fear of God, and departing from evil, are two standing rules that can never fail us: and whatsoever Church is not built upon this Foundation, is not the true Church of Christ: whatsoever Doctrine does not derive it self from this Fountain, is not the wisdom that comes from above, but the policy and device of Man. For,

1. What Religion can there be without the *fear of God*, or to what purpose should God reveal himself to Man but

to give us a more distinct and perfect notion of his power, and to inculcate his fear upon our hearts; that by this rational awe upon us, he might deterr us from those practices, to which our corrupted nature, and infirmities too much incline us, and over-rule our affections by the Sword of Justice, which are too refractory to be reclaim'd by a gentle hand.

Nay what Government could there be over Men, were it not for this fear of God? Where Vice has once got the Dominion over us, what humane Laws, what power upon Earth is sufficient to restrain it? Sometimes our Lusts are too subtile to be discover'd, and sometimes too violent to be suppress'd; and we may as well expect to *draw our Leviathan with a hook*, as to govern a presumptuous sinner, whose heart, like his, is *firm as the rock, and harden'd as the nether milstone*.

But, as God saies to Job, *he that made him can make his Sword approach unto him*: 'Tis his prerogative to soften the hearts of Men, and still the madness of the people, and set bounds to those

those extravagancies which are proof-against all Humane Power. His fear strikes deep into our Souls: His anger reaches to the very quick; and there is no fence against his Arrows, when even his word searches the Reins and Heart,

This is that fear of God, which is call'd Wisdom in my Text, and is the principal ingredient, if not the whole substance of Religion: And since Religion is a thing so generally profess'd, 'tis great pity but it were better understood: Therefore that we may understand it better, we must know, that this *Fear of God*, whereof it is compos'd, consists, as all other commendable habits do, in a certain *Medium*, and due proportion between two extremes: and they are, Superstition, and Profaneness: whereof the first proceeds from too much, and the second from too little fear: Religion teaches us to *honour God*, but Superstition abuses him, and Profaneness *denies* him: Both which are extreme follies, and both are to be cur'd by that Wisdom which is here prescribed us in my Text.

As,

As, 1. the rational *fear of God* is the most proper means to secure us from *superstition* : Which is nothing else but an unreasonable excess of fear, a dreadful apprehension that is incident to ignorant sinful Men, making them afraid, of they know not what, and desirous to be acquitted , but they know not how.

For all mankind have a general notion of the power of God, and of the infirmities and defects of Man: they find themselves continually subject to offend ; for which, their natural reason tells them, they must give an account, and make some expiation. But not having any distinct notion of that God, to whom this expiation is to be made , they commonly frame to themselves some wild extravagant Schemes of devotion, which make their penances, as unreasonable as their sins, and their religion, as offensive as their lives.

One thinks that God is covetous like himself, and therefore devotes to him a share of his ill gotten goods, and by that one only act of his liberality, thinks to atone for all the rapine and
ex-

extortion of his life. *Will the Lord be pleas'd*, saies he, and he doubts not but he must be pleas'd, *with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oyl.*

Another looks upon God as an angry, revengeful Being, that delights in blood, and deadly offerings; and therefore to pacifie this angry God, he prepares a bloody Sacrifice, and at the expence of other Mens lives, he thinks to avert the judgment from himself. *Will the Lord accept the fruit of my body for the sin of my Soul?*

And these are practices not only of the Heathenish, or *Jewish* Church: but we ourselves have heard, and seen, how whole Countries have been laid in blood, and left in desolation, by the furious expiating zeal of a bigotted frightened sinner: and the greatest barbarities which have been executed upon Earth, have proceeded from this superstitious fear, and sanctifi'd with the name of a *zeal for the Lord.*

'Twas such practices as these, that made the Heathen Poet cry out, *tantum religio poterat suadere malorum.* See what mis-

mischief this Religion has done in the World ! And this has been made a jest upon Religion ever since, by the Wicked and Profane : Because some Men are foolishly superstitious in their Devotion, therefore they think that all are so, and call all *Religion* by the name of *superstition*.

But 'tis a great and scandalous mistake. God knows, Religion is quite another thing : 'Tis Humane Virtue, only made more tender and refin'd by Grace : 'Tis Humane Reason, only illuminated and confirm'd by the Word of God ; and if we would but take the Word of God for our guide, we could never be misled into these fatal superstitious errors : but all good things are liable to be abus'd, and none has been more abused than Religion.

'Tis an usual thing with them whose interest it is to cry it down, to give it an odious name, and cloath it in a malicious dress, and expose it, as they did the Primitive Professors of it, in Wolves and Lyons Skins, and then worry it for that false dress's sake. Thus a barbarous superstitious zeal, arising from a defect of
Virtue

Virtue, and an excess of fear, in ignorant unsanctifi'd Men, passes commonly in the world under the name of Religion, and then 'tis no wonder if Religion suffers for it.

But, besides this gross abuse of the Fear of God, there is another, a lower sort of superstition, that is to be piti'd more than blam'd : and that is a religious fear of those things that are not God, and indeed are nothing at all, nothing but the vain delusions of a crazy judgment, the fond imaginations of a sickly brain : such as are all artificial Prognostications, unlucky Omens, and lucky Charms, a whole Legion of Heathenish Errors, that have crept into the Christians belief, without any warrant from the word of God, or any foundation in the nature of the thing : Such also are walking apparitions, visible Spirits, bodily Ghosts, pious Frauds, that were invented by the Subtle, to impose upon the Weak, and stalk them out of their Reason, under the pretence of more than ordinary Religion : Now all this is not Religion, but Superstition : 'tis not the effect of an apprehensive faith, but of a giddy roving fancy.

If

If we were but more possess'd with the fear of God, we should not be so afraid of shadows: Nay, it is to be suspected of many Men, that this awe-full regard which they have for shadows, dispossesses them of the fear of God; and that which drives them out of their wits, will sometime or other, drive them out of their Religion too.

And as some Men are subject to a superstitious Fear, of things that can do them no hurt; so others are troubled with superstitious niceties, that will never do them good: That fill their heads with groundless scruples, and strike their hearts with pannick fears, and make them startle at the sight of an innocent inoffensive action, and fly from an indifferent harmless thing, as if it was the Devil, and the forbidden fruit.

And this they take to be pure tenderness of Conscience, and great strictness of Religion; whereas in truth, it is nothing but superstition: 'tis stretching of Religious duties beyond the Decrees of God, and the Laws of Nature, and *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments*
of

of Men : And if this is not superstition, then nothing is.

Touch not, tast not, said our Mother Eve, when God himself said no such thing : he only said, *Tast not* ; but *Touch not* was an addition of her own, and the Devil made his advantage of it : for when she found it did her no hurt to Touch the Fruit, he easily perswaded her to Tast it too ; and to this superstition of hers, all mankind owe their ruin : And it has been a common misfortune ever since, for Men to fall, like her, from too strict a sense of Religion, to no Religion at all.

Now all these Follies and Superstitions are to be cur'd only by that *Wisdom* which my Text calls the *Fear of God*, and this fear is only to be learnt from his holy word. Here we are taught all things that are necessary for us to do, and all that is necessary to be left undone. Here are describ'd all the paths of Vertue and Praise, that we must follow, and the bye-ways of sin and danger, that we must avoid : from hence Good and Evil take their stamp, and by this Standard all our actions are to be try'd.

But

But whosoever forsakes this rule, and follows a superstitious fancy of his own, calling innocent indifferent things, *Evil*, and evil unlawful things, *Good*, he takes upon him to correct the word of God and to alter the Standard of Religion and so brings a dreadful wo upon himself. *Wo unto him that calls good evil, and evil good.*

Where we have a certain rule to direct us, what madness is it in Man to forsake this rule, and be guided by his own inventions? what is this but renouncing of our God, and having recourse to the Magician? And indeed, as Witchcraft is one sort of Superstition, so all Superstition is a kind of Witchcraft 'tis abandoning of our own reason, and calling up an invisible fantastical spirit to resolve those foolish scruples which we create our selves. But,

2. As the rational fear of God defends us from *Superstition*, so in the next place I should shew that it guards us also from *Profaneness*, which is another folly incident to those that have not the knowledge of the pure Religion: A scandalous

lous defect of fear, in those who live as if there was no God in the world. But this is a vice, which, to the reproach of our Age, is grown so common that I need not describe it, and is so manifestly contrary to the Fear of God, that I need not stand to prove it: Indeed Profaneness and the true Religion, are so utterly inconsistent, that one would think where any Religion is established, there Profaneness could never come: (*Procul ite profani*) *Be gone ye profane*, was the solemn conjuration, even at the Heathen Worship.

Nevertheless, where Superstition prevails on one hand, Profaneness will always get ground on the other; and the very reason why Religion runs so low on this side, is because it runs too high on that: For how contrary soever these two Vices seem, yet they are contrary, but just like East and West; they lie directly in a Line, and meet exactly in a Point: Where the one ends, the other commonly begins: And accordingly we may observe, that when a Superstitious Man grows weary of that burdensome folly, he seldom fails to turn Atheistical and Profane: When a Profane Atheist

C

is

is frighted from his Vice, he commonly runs into Superstition, and from an ignorant unreasonable course of Sin, he flies to an ignorant injudicious state of Penance.

And of this truth there are too many, and too notorious proofs. We might instance, not only in single persons of all Religions, but in whole Nations, and Churches in the World, where the Conversation of Men is nothing else but a constant passage from one of these extremes to the other; a continual succession as it were of Carnivals and Lents: Where Debauchery and Superstition govern by turns, and 'tis hard to say which is most abominable of the two: One day shews them extravagant in their Vice, and the next as foolish in their Penance: and thus their whole Life is divided, between Drunkenness, and Disease; and all the Spiritual Physick which they take, is but to prepare them for another Riot.

Such gross abuses in Religion as these, one may easily guess, must needs bring Religion it self into disrepute: And so indeed it has effectually done: For in
all

all Countries, and Nations in the World, there are not so many profess'd Atheists to be found, as in one superstitious vitiated Church, where the blind lead the blind, and make the Faith appear abominable through their Vice, and ridiculous through their Superstition.

They who have eyes to see, and yet no better guides to follow, will rather chuse to wander by themselves, than to be so tamely led, and all to so little purpose : And how unfortunate a Creature, how helpless a Thing is Man, when left thus to his own disposal ; when a corrupted Religion has debauched the Principles of his Nature, and he has just so much Reason left, as to abhor the corruptions of his Religion.

Before I dismiss this Point, I must not omit Hypocrisie, which is one sort, and indeed the worst sort of Profaneness: 'tis a Vice so utterly inconsistent with Religion, That it is not Fearing, but Mocking God : So destructive of good Manners, that it makes a mock not only of Sin, but of Godliness too : 'Tis a Plague that is most pernicious to the Soul of Man, because it is the most concealed,

cealed, and it is the more incurable, because 'tis always playing with the Word of God, and abusing all the methods of its Cure: And he that lives continually upon Antidotes, has no means left to expel the Poyson.

'Tis a Vice that makes the greatest havock in the Church of God, and most effectually overturns Religion. He that is openly Profane, like a Robber upon the Road, sins only to the damage of private Men: But the secret Hypocrite, like a Traytor to his Country, offends against the whole Constitution; undermines the very Foundation of Godliness, and brings Religion it self into disgrace.

What monstrous vizors, what absurd disguises, must the Hypocrite put on, to cover the deformity of his Soul, and conceal his abominable vices under an affected cloak of Godliness? And then, what wonder if Men do ridicule Religion, when they see it so ridiculously dress'd. But what is worst of all, when the vizor falls off, as it will sometimes do, and their nature shows its self; when the cloak is too narrow,

row, or too thin, to cover all, and some flagrant vice shines through the veil, what a fatal blow must this be to Religion, and make it not only ridiculous, but odious too? How will the World be tempted to abhor the professors of Godliness, when they see Men stile themselves the Godly Party, and assume the name of Saints, and then think they have a prerogative to enjoy their Sins?

This therefore is the first judgment which we ought, and indeed cannot chuse but make, of the truth of any Religion, whether it be such as naturally tends to plant the *Fear of God* in the hearts of Men, and to preserve it from the two extremes, of Superstition on the one hand, and Profaneness or Hypocrisie on the other: and whatsoever Church encourages these Corruptions, we may justly condemn for an Impostour.

But what is of nearer concern to us, from hence we may learn how to make a judgment of our own Sincerity, and Proficiency in Religion; namely, if we have work'd this awful veneration into our hearts, and have a true rational Fear

of God before our eyes. Not a servile Superstitious Fear, such as I have describ'd already; not a *fearful looking for of judgment*, such as is always the consequence, and commonly the sign of Sin; but such a Religious awe, as encourages our Vertue: Such a respectful fear of God's Anger, as is also a demonstration of our Love.

And this is the only test that can never fail us: Our Vertue is uncertain, and through the necessary infirmities of our nature, will sometimes be intermitted; and he whose confidence ebbs and flows, according to the measures of his Obedience, must always be in a restless case, and uneasie in his Religion. Our Devotion also may be deceitful, and either from the diverse constitution of our tempers, or the different apprehension of our dangers, it may sometimes rise, or fall, to such a degree, as shall make us think our selves more, or less Religious, than we are indeed. And as for our Zeal, that, in its own nature, is variable and inconstant: It comes, and goes by fits, is too violent to last, and too uncertain to depend upon.

Only

Only the *Fear of God* is such a fix'd and steady Principle, as when it is once well rooted in our Hearts, can never be remov'd. Tho it should sometimes give way to a temptation, yet it will return upon us with greater force, and recover the possession of our Souls with more advantage: 'Tis such a settled habit of Religion in our minds, as prompts us always to a reverence for Vertue, and tho it may possibly be over-rul'd, yet it cannot be over-come by Vice.

Without this, it is in vain for us to value our selves, upon our Vertue, our Devotion, or our Zeal; and we are only so far Religious, as we are advanc'd in the Fear of God: Our Zeal may be the effect of Passion, our Devotion may proceed from Danger, and our Vertue may be the consequence of Self-love; but the Fear of God, when 'tis Genuine and Sincere, can be nothing else but pure Religion; and Religion without it, can be nothing else but Folly and Deceit.

2. The second Character of the pure Religion, and that which is a necessary consequence of the first, is to *Depart from Evil*: And here, to give Vertue its due, and put it into its proper place, tho it is not of its self a sufficient demonstration of the purity of Religion, yet it is so necessary an Appendix to it, that without this Vertue the pure Religion can never be demonstrated. This is that over-tact whereby the Fear of God within us is to be prov'd, that only *Work* whereby we must shew our *Faith*, and he that has nothing to shew for his Religion, had even as good have no Religion at all.

'Tis by an open Confession of our Faith that we must be justifi'd; but he that confesses God with his Mouth, and denies him in his Heart, who is a Christian only in his *words*, and an errant Heathen in his *Works*, may think perhaps to impose either upon God, or Man, but will find to his loss, that he only cheats himself.

It was for the restoring of our innocence, that God taught us the fear of his

his Name, and establish'd his Religion amongst us : It was for the securing of our Vertue, that we our selves were baptiz'd into this Religion, and adopted into his Church : And therefore a vitious life, as it is abominable in all Men, so in a Christian it is insufferable : 'Tis acting against his own Conscience, contradicting his own Reason, and running himself into apparent danger, even contrary to his own Sense : 'Tis giving himself the Lye, and punishing himself for it too : In short, 'tis so gross an absurdity, as God, in his Infinite Mercy, may forgive us; but we can hardly forgive our selves.

If we know not the danger of Sin, we are not Men of *Religion* : If we know the danger, and yet will run the hazard, we are not Men of *Understanding*. One of these, every professed sinner, even in his own judgment, must renounce : But in the judgment of all wise Men, he renounces both ; for Understanding can no more subsist without Religion, than Religion can subsist without Understanding.

I do not say, that we must conclude that Religion to be false, where some of its Professors are Vitious; for then no Religion could ever give evidence of its truth: Neither do I say, that Man's Religion is vain, who sometimes is guilty of a sin, for then no Man could ever give an evidence of his Religion.

But this I say, that he that returns frequently to his sin, does much endanger his Religion: And he that lives in a constant habit of sin, does renounce it. That Church which does not use all possible means to encourage Vertue, is a corrupted Church; but That which tolerates Vice, is as bad as no Church at all.

What shall we think then of those Men, and their Pretensions to Christianity, who contend so long for their Faith, till they lose their Vertue; and build their Church upon the ruines of their Religion: Who judge that Cause to be good, which serves to advance their Interest; and then judge all means to be lawful, which serve to advance their Cause.

Nay,

Nay, what shall we think of those Men, who not only break the commandments of God, but teach Men so to do, by devising such Rules and Methods in their Church, as encourage Vice, and make Vertue look like a needless, unprofitable restraint : That pretend to find out new ways to Heaven, without troubling either our Faith, or Vertue in the search, and requiring nothing from us but only a strong presumption.

And that there is no Calumny, or Fiction in all this, I could instance in more Churches in the World than one, where Men are taught to call themselves the Elect, the Faithful, the People of God ; and then encourag'd to presume upon the Merits of their Party, and think themselves safe in the Bosom of their Church, without examining the reason why. And that they may be certain they shall not miscarry, some Spiritual Undertaker shall pass his own word for their Salvation, tho the Word of God is silent in the case.

Let those who please, quit their hold which God himself has given them in
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the Gospel, and trust in such airy hopes: But certainly no wise Man would let a matter of so great importance, as the Salvation of his own Soul, depend upon so slight a thread, as the Authority of another Man: And I believe, many of those who commit all their spiritual concerns to the direction of their Spiritual Guide, would be loath to trust either his Honesty, or his Understanding, with the management of their temporal Estate.

But the Truth is, Understanding is grown to be a great fault in some Mens Religion: and well it may, because their Religion is not consistent with Understanding: and that's the reason why, instead of answering our Arguments, they make it their business to call us Names, to possess their Disciples minds with groundless prejudices, and stuff their heads with Enthusiastical conceits; and instead of giving them a Reason of their Faith, they tell them it is not their business to Judge but to Believe: And when they have perswaded Men out of their Judgment, 'tis no hard matter to perswade them out of their Senses too: And so instead of Wisdom
and

and Understanding, we have seen a Religion grounded upon Malice, supported by Ignorance, and made up of Absurdities and Contradictions.

But after all, the *Fear of God*, and to *depart from Evil*, are the only evident and certain means of Salvation, and the only infallible signs of the true Christian Church : And in such a Church I am sure we live, where these means are due-ly offer'd, and easie to be had. Here we may certainly be sav'd ; but then we must *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling* : If these terms will not satisfy us, we may go to other Churches, where we shall be promis'd better, and fare worse : And after we have flatter'd our selves with a little groundless confidence, it will end in this *fear and trembling* at last, and perhaps *without Salvation*.

For when all is done, when we have examined the pretences of all the several Churches upon Earth, their prerogative of Saints, and Indulgencies for Sins ; their inward assurances, and outward boasts : We shall find that nothing but our own Faith and Repentance can save us ; nothing but a true well grounded
Fear

Fear of God and a sincere *departing from Evil* can ever carry us to Heaven.

And for our assistance in these duties, there are no means wanting in our Church. Here we have a pure Form of Worship, where all Vertues are inculcated into our minds, all Graces are prayed for, and our very Prayers are instructive: Where God, and only God, is the Object, and a universal Charity to all mankind; is the subject of our Devotion.

Here the word of God, that unerring Rule of Life, is daily read for our Information, and explain'd for our Use, and press'd upon us, *with line upon line, and precept upon precept*. Here the *Fear of God* is set before our eyes, and *to depart from Evil* is recommended to the meditation of our hearts, as duely as this day passes over our heads: And as they are duely taught, so I hope they are effectually put in practice. I am sure 'tis our shame, and will be our condemnation, if they are not so.

Indeed, we do not use to make any outward boasts of our proficiency, nor openly applaud our own Vertue, like some other Men: And 'tis not fitting
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that we should : For Vertue and Humility must always go together ; but whosoever values himself upon his Piety, and sounds a Trumpet to his own Praise, like the Pharisee, he may appear a Saint, in the temple, but will be sure to go home a Reprobate.

The conclusion of all is this, That the *Fear of God and to depart from Evil*, are the two only essential parts of the true Religion, and nothing but the true Religion is desirable to an understanding Man. This is a Tree of Knowledge, whose fruits we may freely eat of, and establish our selves in Paradise by doing so : A treasure of Riches, which God has given us to live upon, and the more plentifully we live upon it, the richer we shall grow.

This is the greatest blessing that ever God bestow'd upon us ; 'tis a beam of the Divinity shining upon our hearts ; the glory of God on high, inhabiting this lower world : 'Tis the very Shechinah of his Presence, by which he still appears to the Sons of Men ; and howsoever it may be abus'd by the Superstitious, or slighted by the Profane, yet
take

take it in its genuine simplicity, its native beauty, and it is the noblest prerogative of our nature, the richest propriety, nay the very property of Man : *And unto Man he said, the fear of the Lord that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is Understanding.*

We may please our selves in searching after other knowledge, and making new discoveries of Nature : in diving into the depth of those truths that are below us, and prying into those secrets that are above us, and inquiring into all things that are done under the Sun : and under these mighty improvements of our Reason, we may despise Religion as a servile vulgar thing : But after all our Curiosity, and all our Success to boot, if we are never the better, I am sure we are never the wiser for it.

If we have not learnt the Fear of God, nor improv'd our own Vertue in the search, we had better have confin'd our selves to our own Closets, and our own Hearts, and might have learnt more wisdom without so much a do : For a Man to study all things besides, and be
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an utter stranger to himself, is but a more laborious, vexatious folly : To be very knowing abroad, and very ignorant at home, is such a knowledge as can never turn us to account.

We may spend our time in heaping up of other Riches, employ six days in bettering of our Fortunes, and hardly afford a portion of the seventh, for the improving of our Souls: But when we come to sum up our Accounts, we shall find that all the fruit of our six days labour, is either spent, or lost, or at best not worth the keeping: And nothing but the product of the seventh, is left for us to live upon for ever.

It was the saying of a Great Statesman, Dying in Disgrace, *That if he had served his God, as faithfully as he had done his King, he should not have been so miserably forsaken.* It was well considered, but it was too late: And this is the case of many other Men. Had they been less Politick, they had been more Happy: Had they been less Worldly, they had been more Wise, had they shew'd more regard unto their Souls; and less unto their Bodies, it had been

the preservation of both their Bodies and Souls.

And now we may follow our own devices still ; but this is a truth, of which if we are not perswaded yet, yet we shall be convinc'd at last, when Death will correct our errour, but not amend it : Consider this before the Season is past, and be Wise betimes, for *there is neither Device nor Wisdom in the Grave whither thou goest.*

PSAL.

PSALM IX. 20.

*Put them in fear, O Lord, that the
Heathen may know themselves to be
but Men.*

MY last Discourse was to
shew how the pure Re-
ligion teaches us the Fear
of God. I shall now
shew how the Fear of
God teaches us to live like Men: That
is, it teaches us to know our selves:
And in order to it we must know, that
when God created the Heavens and the
Earth, and distinguish'd the whole Crea-
tion into their several Orders and De-
grees; He plac'd Man in the middle
Region, between himself and the in-
feriour World, that so we might be

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qualifi'd to Obey the one, and Command the other.

And that we might with Prudence and Conduct maintain this our proper Station, preserving our respect towards God, and our Government towards the Creatures; he gave us his Law to instruct us, and keep us steddy, to that course of life, upon which all our Wisdom, and all our Happiness depends.

Nevertheless, through our Perverseness or Simplicity, we meet with many tempting objects in the world, that are apt to divert us from this right Course, and bend our endeavours another way.

Sometimes a vain immoderate desire of Greatness, makes us forget our Duty of Submission unto God: And sometimes an excessive love of Riches or Pleasures, makes us so Little, as to forego that Superiority which God has given us over the Creatures.

Thus

Thus when we ought to walk uprightly, like Men, in the ways of Wisdom, Ambition blinds our Eyes, Covetousness tyes up our Hands, and Luxury throws us on the Ground : And there we lie despicable and forelorn ; for by a just Judgment of God upon us, we no sooner pretend to be something *more than Men*, but we degenerate into something *less* : And Pride has always this fall, that we cannot exalt our selves above God, and His Laws ; but we must at the same time debase our selves below his Creatures, and shamefully become subject unto them, who by nature were made slaves to us.

To prevent this fatal miscarriage it is, that God has enforc'd his Law upon us, by many gracious promises to invite us, and by many dreadful Terrors to affright us to our Duty : and when the first of these methods proves ineffectual, he takes care to apply the second.

If we are grown so hardned in our sins, that nothing but Scourges can make us feel ; so stupid, that nothing but Judgments

ments can awake us, 'tis time to pray that God would send his Terroures amongst us, to make us *know him*; his Judgments, to make us *know our selves*. *Put them in fear O Lord, that the Heathen may know themselves to be but Men.*

From which words we may observe.

1. That it is a Heathenish thing for Men not to *know themselves*: And therefore this knowledge is not only a Humane Accomplishment, but also a Religious Duty.

2. That the thing which hinders this Knowledge in us, is a foolish false opinion of our own Deserts; we don't consider that we are *but Men*.

3. That the only way to reduce us to sober thoughts, and make us know our selves better, is the *Fear of God*: *Put them in fear O Lord*, and then the Heathen will *know themselves to be but Men*.

The present time will allow me to speak only of the former of these Heads: and upon this Subject I shall shew,

1. The

1. The Excellency, and Usefulness of this Knowledge, and why it should be desir'd.

2. The Nature and Extent of it, and how it may be obtain'd : And

1. 'Tis a most excellent useful thing, for Men to *know themselves*. Some may admire perhaps, why the Author of this Precept amongst the Heathens, should be so celebrated for it, and accounted so great a Philosopher, and so Wise a Man. For since nothing is so Dear to us, as we are to our selves ; therefore for a Man to *know himself*, must certainly be, of all Knowledge, the most delightful : And since nothing is so near to us, as we our selves ; one would think nothing should be more easie.

But it is our Ignorance that makes us think so : Alas our Eyes are planted the wrong way for such a Prospect : We can with ease gaze round about us, and be very intent upon foreign remote Concerns, and all the while be utterly unacquainted with our own.

'Tis an awkward thing, for a Man to look into himself: 'tis an odious thing to rake into the filthiness of his own Heart, and discompose the quiet of his Mind, when 'tis so clear at the top, and so well *settled upon the Lees* at the bottom: And if his Conscience gives no disturbance unto him, he is as unwilling to disturb his Conscience.

Hence it is that so many Men take up with a superficial insight, and a false account of their own Affairs, and they are alwaies the most pleas'd, and satisfi'd with themselves, who have the least reason for it: If their face does but look fair in a flattering-glass, they never reflect upon the foulness of their Stomach.

Now tho we are apt to think, that this fond conceit of our own worth, this over-valuing of our selves, is only an amusing Folly, an innocent allowable Mistake; yet upon examination we shall find it, according to the Language of my Text, to be a *Heathenish Vice*, a dangerous error, so gross an indisposition of mind, as disables us from all those
good

good offices, for which God sent us into the world.

'Tis giving up our Reason, to be guided by fancy : And committing our selves to a blind, giddy, heedless course of Life, where we had need to have all our Wits, and all our Eyes about us.

He that will not look before him, in such a slippery, intricate way, as we have to pass, 'tis no wonder, if he is often in the wrong ; and no commendation, if he does sometimes blunder upon the right.

He that will not be at the pains to *know himself*, lives as it were by Chance, and moves without Design, and a Being is but thrown away upon him.

He takes Vice, or Vertue, indifferently as they come, as they suit best with his fancy, or convenience ; but seldom looks so high, as to the exigence of his nature, or the good pleasure of his God. Or if by chance he does cast his eye that way, and shew any formal respect to Vertue or Religion, yet it is with so much partiality to himself, so much over-weening

ing of his own Deserts, that he grows fond of that which is nothing worth, and so brings it at last to nothing at all.

And now, when a conceited Man has thus lost himself, 'tis impossible that he should maintain his proper station in the World, or keep within the bounds of Decency and Justice towards other Men: But will be apt to inroach upon their Liberties, and usurp upon their Rights; and to this Ignorant Self-love, we must ascribe all that insolence, and imposition, and violence, which we see practised in the world.

We may as well expect Meekness from a Lyon, or Temperance from a Wolf, as common Justice from a Man who is conceited of his own Worth, and full of nothing but Himself.

He that thinks himself something *more than Man*, will not allow others to be *so much*: Will not look upon them as his fellow Creatures; but takes a Pleasure, and a Pride, in trampling them under foot, like despicable Worms; or riding upon their back, like servile Beasts; and
thinks

thinks this is an Honour due to his high Deserts.

But what is worst of all, when a fond Man is thus Mounted, and upon the Spur, 'tis more than all the Powers upon Earth can do to hold him in : A Spirit of Government presently grows upon him, and makes him despise all Authority but his own ; and an ill Man alwaies proves an ill Subject too.

From whence proceed all Heresies and Schisms in the Church, but from this Ignorance and Carnal Pride ; this over-valuing our selves, makes us under-value the Ordinance of God. *You take too much upon you*, said *Corah*, and his Associates, to the *Fathers of the Congregation*, when it was only these *Sons of Levi*, that took too much upon themselves.

From whence proceed all Tumults and Factions in the State, but from this same usurping humour, this exalting of our selves above measure, and crying down every Ordinance of Man : *We are they that ought to speak, and who is Lord over us* : Is still the Motto of every ignorant assuming sinner. *We are they!* Lord, what

what are we? If we had but the Sense to consider it, or the Grace to understand it: A load of infirmities, a lump of flesh, wherein our spirits are imprison'd, and confin'd, and have nothing but some perverse passions to prove that we have a Soul.

A worthless, senseless Creature we are, God knows; that have nothing to boast of, but what we receiv'd from God: And nothing but our Humility to recommend us either to God or Man. What is this Wisdom of ours? Where is this Goodness and Greatness, which we value our selves upon? when whosoever does so, knows not what it is to be either Wise, or Great, or Good,

In short, 'tis nothing but Ignorance that makes us admire our selves, and nothing but this fond admiring of our selves, that occasions all the decays of Vertue, Religion, and Government in the World: And then how necessary a Duty is it, and how great a Grace for Men to *know themselves*.

Where-

Wherefore, for the obtaining of this Grace, let us in the

2. Place consider, wherein it does consist : And here we must observe that there are two things compriz'd in this Knowledge of our Selves, namely, that we should know,

1. Our Nature and

2. Our End.

1. We must consider our own Nature; that is, the real Value and Station which we bear in the World, with respect to other Creatures, and other Men ; That so we may take right Measures in all our Actions, and Comport our selves with such agreeable Decency, as befits the Title which we bear.

Hence it was that the Wise Ancients compar'd this World to a Stage, where every person is to Act, and Speak conformably to his Place, and to preserve his proper Character : A Prince must not degrade himself to those mean Performances, which are honest and requisite in a Peasant ;

fant ; nor a Peasant, usurp the Stile, or affect the Figure of a Prince : In the observance of which Rule, consists the Gracefulness, and Excellence of all Composition ; and every Transgression in this Point, is remark'd as the great absurdity.

How absurd is it then for Man, that is born in Ignorance, in Weakness, and in Sin, the Son of Corruption, and Brother of the Worms ; to aspire unto the Throne of God, assume unto himself an uncontrollable Power, and flatter himself that he is *more than Man*.

But on the other side, how shameful and indecent is it for Man, that is born Lord of this World, and Heir of Eternity, Companion of Angels, and Representative of God upon Earth, to submit to fordid mean desires, to stand upon the same level with the Beasts that perish, and make himself *less than Man*.

Therefore it behoves us much to consider our Nature, and Constitution ; that our Bodies were made out of the Earth, to teach us Humility ; but inspir'd with a living Soul from Heaven, to keep us from being Base.

Now

Now this consideration of the nature of mankind in general, will teach us to seek after those things that are agreeable to our nature, and to find out where the point of this agreement lies.

As for instance. If our Soul is our better part, we must bestow upon it our greatest Care. If our Soul is Eternal, it requires an Eternal Good. If our Soul is derived from Heaven, it can no more be satisfi'd with earthly things, than an Angel can be fed with husks, or a Spirit cloth'd with Skins: And since these beggarly Elements won't suffice, we must go further for our Dress, and look higher for our Nourishment: Be Cloth'd with Vertue, and Fed with Grace.

And together with the nature of mankind in general, we must study also our own particular Natures, and Inclinations: That we may know what improvements are to be made within us, and how to apply the advantages of Religion, to the exigencies of our Soul.

For

For there is no Man so perfectly Vertuous, but that he has a tendency to some one, or other Vice: And there is hardly any Man so profligate in Vice; who has not in him some remains of Vertue.

If therefore we know our selves, and understand all these our Inclinations to Good and Evil; it is possible, with that small remainder of Vertue, to gain ground upon our Vice, and by degrees to cast it out: For a little Armour, well plac'd, and advantageously manag'd, may make a very good defence.

There may be some Principles of Honour in us, that we are not aware of: Some Sparks of Vertue, that now lie cover'd with our Dust and Ashes, and with a little care, may be blown up into a Glorious Flame. Surely 'tis worth our while to search them out, to cherish these remains of Honour, and Goodness in us, and propagate the Seeds of Vertue: For Religion also, as well as Vice, in its own nature is apt to spread: Our Saviour compares it to a grain of Mustard, which tho it be the least of all Seeds, yet with
good

good management will grow into a spacious Tree.

Tho our hearts are generally hardened by sin, yet we may find some tractable corner, some tender part, that is capable of good impressions : And so by degrees we may reduce the whole. Nay, that very softness, and good Nature in us, which too often betrays us into Vice, may by proper arguments, be so wrought upon, as to lead us more powerfully to the contrary Vertues.

Let us but learn to *know our selves*, and see how we stand affected towards the particular Vanities and Vices of the World, and then we have discovered our malady, which is the first, and greatest step towards the working of our Cure. Then we have no more to do, but to use our diligence, and care, to beat down those vices which we find most predominant within us, and to set a double guard upon that which is our weakest side.

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But

But if by our neglects we give the Devil an opportunity to assault us where we are unprepar'd, he knows us, better than we know our selves, and wants neither Subtilty to see his Advantage, nor Malice to pursue it to our ruine.

This therefore we must make our principal design, our especial care, to get the better of our Favourite Sins, our Darling Lusts; and when this is done, we shall find no difficulty in all the rest; but till then, all the rest we do is nothing to the purpose.

And yet how usual a thing is it for Men to let this alone, and bend all their forces another way: To fortifie themselves against remoter dangers, and insult over those lusts which they have no inclination to; But as for their beloved Sin, That has taken Sanctuary in their Bosom; there they cherish it, and keep it up, and will let neither Correction nor Reproof come near it.

Hence

Hence it is, that so many Men live, in all appearance, very Regular and Zealous Lives, and comply with all the outward Exercises of Religion, and yet not alter'd all their life long, in that particular, which stands most in need of alteration.

Any other Vice, but that, they can handle well enough, and sometimes too harshly too, when they see it in other Men; but as for their own fore, it is in a tender part, and they will not suffer it to be touch'd.

'Tis this that turns all Godliness into Formality, and frustrates the design of all Religion: And this want of *knowing themselves*, is the only cause, why so many Men amongst us make outward profession of the Gospel, and yet are inwardly never the better for it. But,

2. The next thing to be consider'd in order to know our selves, is the end at which we drive. Now there are two sorts of Ends which we usually direct our Actions to, an Ultimate, and an in-

E 2 intermediate

intermediate End: And it concerns us much to know the difference between them, for fear we should set up our rest too soon, and think we have reach'd our End, before we are got half the way.

As, 1. every considerate Man proposes to himself some principal, ultimate End; some universal, main design, which he pursues in all his Thoughts, and makes each Motion of his Life, each Line of his Actions, to bear upon this point, as upon the Centre of his Happiness.

Thus one sort of Men propose Honour for their Portion; a second chuse Riches; a third Pleasure; and here and there we meet a Man who places his lot in Vertue and Religion.

Now when Men have once fix'd their choice, especially when it falls upon the meaner lower concerns of this World, they are commonly so true to themselves, that they drive furiously on, and aim at nothing, nay think upon nothing else.

But

But then, 2. Beside this Principal, there are other Inferiour Ends, or rather Means, that are necessary to facilitate and effect the Great Work in Hand: and these means, we must know, are so far to be prosecuted (and no farther) as they are likely to conduce to our main design.

As for instance. He that principally proposes Honour to himself, like the Ambitious *Absolom*, may endeavour to get Riches too; not for the sake of the Riches themselves, but that they may help to advance him in the eyes of Men, and recommend him to the favour of the Multitude. For which purpose we usually find him as Profuse in spending, as he was Greedy in getting of his Wealth.

Again, he that designs only to grow Rich, like the Covetous *Judas*, labours after Honour and Reputation besides, as far as may serve to promote his Interest; and then willingly parts with his Reputation again, in hopes of a greater Purchase.

Thus also he that makes Pleasure his only business, as *Solomon* sometimes did, may make use of Riches, and Honours, to put him in the way ; and then will sacrifice them both, for the obtaining of his grand design.

And lastly, he that proposes to lead a Vertuous Religious Life, may desire a Competency of the Riches and Honours, and Pleasures of the World, for the convenient supporting of his Vertue ; and yet will be sure to quit them all, whensoever he finds them inconsistent with his Religion.

In all which cases it is to be observed, that the last end is most desirable, because it is That for whose sake we undertake the rest : And therefore, tho we may be call'd Subtle, or Busy, or Industrious, for the well managing of these little Ends, and Under-plots of Life, yet our Wisdom and Prudence is to be try'd,

1. By the right
Choice; and,
 2. By the vigorous
Prosecution
- } of our Principal,
main Design.

And, 1. From the Case thus stated, I wish every Man would seriously ask himself this important question, What End *he* proposes to himself, or What *his* business is in the World?

Perhaps his Ambition will answer for him, That he would fain grow Honourable and Great: And truly so far is modest enough, for Air is as thin diet as a Man can live upon. But surely to come into the world like a Meteor, only to make a blaze, be gaz'd upon, and so go out again: Or like a Comet, to be admir'd by the Vulgar, and slighted by the Wise, is something below the dignity of a Reasonable Creature.

Perhaps another Man will say, That his business here is only to take his Pleasure. And if it had been his own Pleasure, that brought him into the World, he had answered well enough. But does not his Being here depend upon

the good pleasure of his God? Does not his Well-being depend upon the protection of the Laws, and the Good of the Common-wealth? Surely then he ought, both in Gratitude, in Prudence, and in Conscience too, to conform to the Pleasure of God, and to the Government where he lives: To make his Life serviceable to the Church, and State: And not to say so brutish a thing, as that his Pleasure is his only Law, and his Belly his only God.

Perhaps a third Man will say, That his design is only to grow Rich: And this I say is a manifest Absurdity, an unpardonable Contradiction. For I demand, Wherefore would he grow Rich? If it be to promote either the Honour, or the Pleasure of Himself, or his Posterity, then Honour or Pleasure are his Principal End; and Riches, according to their usual stile, are only Means.

If he says he would grow Rich, because he would grow Rich, which is indeed a covetous Man's commonest, and wisest Reason: I say, he is as far from being Rich, as his Reason is from being Wise; the most Indigent, as well
as

as the most despicable Man alive. For he that has not the heart to expend what he has gotten, is really poorer, as to all the Ends of Riches, than he that has got nothing to expend.

Thus we see that neither Riches, nor Pleasures, nor Honours, those celebrated idols of the World, can be the last result of our wish, or the Principal End which a Wise Man proposes to himself.

A Man in the highest Honours may be discontented, and have good reason for it too: A Man of Pleasure may be contemn'd, and it is no wonder if he is: And all the World knows a Man of great Riches may be Miserable, even to a Proverb.

Since therefore none of these things can be the ultimate Design, the proper Object of our Wishes; I demand again, upon second thoughts, What is it that we propose to our selves? What is it that we desire?

No doubt but every Man desires to be Happy: And no doubt but it is our own fault if we are not so. But 'tis
not

not our own fault if we don't arrive to great Riches, and Honours, and sensual Delights: And therefore none of these things can be our real Happiness.

But yet for want of knowing our selves better, we pursue these things, as if they were our only Goods, and run on so heedless upon the wrong scent, that we seldom stop till it is too late to return.

Therefore as we desire to be Happy, so we must study to be Wise: And leaving these Vanities, to the World, to whom they properly belong: To the Gentiles, who seek after them: to the *Heathen*, who do not *know themselves*, no more than they do the God that made them: We must look out for some other end, that is more suitable to our Nature, and more worthy of our Pains: And doubtless this can be nothing else, but the Service of our God, and the Salvation of our Souls.

We may wander all the World over for some agreeable satisfaction, but here only it is to be found: Here we must fix our hopes, hither we must make all
our

our actions tend, and there is indeed no other way of reconciling our ordinary worldly cares to reason, or even to common Sense, but by making them subordinate and subservient to Religion :

Then we may desire to grow Rich, for the greater opportunity of doing Good ; when we do that Good upon Earth, in hopes of obtaining a good reward in Heaven.

Then we may look after some innocent Pleasures too, for the preservation and refreshment of our life ; when we support our life here, in order to purchase a better life hereafter.

Nay then we may fairly desire Honour, and Reputation in the World ; that by becoming more illustrious examples of Vertue to other Men, we may gain one step farther towards the saving of our own Souls.

It is this last End, that not only encourages, but justifies, and sanctifies all the rest, without which they are not worth our least consideration. Take away the *eternal weight of Glory*, as the Apostle calls it,

it, and how frivolous a thing is the most favourable breath of Men. How insignificant are all these momentary pleasures here, without the prospect of those Heavenly Pleasures for evermore. Or what would it profit us to gain the Riches of the whole World, if we must pay our Soul down for the Purchase.

All the whole mass of Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures, laid together, without the spiritual blessing, the inward good, are as insignificant to us, as a long train of Cyphers: They only serve to take up room, and make a shew, a specious impertinent heap of emptiness, and nothing; but it is only this last end that gives a value to the sum, and makes it bear a figure.

An unstable, giddy mind may seek to entertain its self abroad, and divert some idle hours in the enjoyment of Pleasures that are from without; but all solid Comfort, and substantial Joy, must be sought at home. In our own Breast lies the Treasury of all our Happiness, and if we would drink such waters as should fill and satisfy our Souls, we must draw them out of our own Cistern.

And

And now, 2. If we have pitch'd upon this our proper End, and chose aright ; let us ask our selves one question more, What progress we have made in this our Choice ; with what success we have prosecuted our Main Design ; what advances we have made towards the Salvation of our Souls ?

And this is a question, as necessary to be ask'd, but more difficult to be answer'd. For there are many Men amongst us, who are wise enough to know, but not wise enough to do their Duty : And though they see the glorious prize before them, yet they do not so run that they may obtain it ; but sloathfully acquiesce in the formalities of Religion, and an unactive Faith, as if putting our selves in the way, were enough to carry us to Heaven.

'Tis strange indeed, that we should know our Religion so well, and yet be no better for it ; That we should understand the value of our precious Soul, and yet take no care to save it. Nay, that God himself should daily invite us, and command us to be sav'd, and still we perversly reject the profer.

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Our Saviour speaks of *taking heaven by violence*, to shew what insupportable labours a good Christian would undergo, and what incredible difficulties he should overcome, to procure the Salvation of his Soul: but now we seem to expect that Heaven should commit a violence upon us, and behave our selves with great indifference in the point of our Salvation.

For this it was, that the Apostles, and Primitive Martyrs of our Faith, endured the severest Persecutions, Imprisonments, and Deaths; and yet we, for whose sake all this was done, can hear it all without remorse.

For this it is, that the Angels themselves, who dwell with everlasting light, yet receive an accession to that *Joy in Heaven, over every sinner that repenteth*; and yet we, who are their peculiar charge, have no Joy but in our Sins.

For this it was, that our Blessed Saviour relinquish'd all those joys, and submitted himself to a most troublesome Life, and a shameful Death; and yet we,
who

who were the Cause of this, are neither
asham'd or troubl'd at it.

Surely he did not make himself so Poor,
only to make us Rich, and fill us with
Milk and Honey; these were the beg-
garly encouragements of the Law: Not
to bestow temporal Honours upon us,
and gratifie our vain Ambition; these
are below the Dignity of the Gospel:
Prizes too mean for the Son of God to
purchase, and even too mean for the
Sons of Men to desire. Much less did he
take up His Cross, that we might throw
off our own, and indulge our selves in
sensual delights; that is a contradiction
to all Religion. But he did it, that we
might learn to follow the Captain of our
Salvation by a laborious Vertue, and by
the Sweat of our Brows might obtain
a Glorious Crown of Victory for our
Heads.

This is that great Work of our Re-
demption, which the Angels delight to
carry on, and for which, our Blessed
Saviour relinquish'd the Joys of Heaven,
and his Apostles renounced all the Plea-
sures upon Earth.

And

And shall we, whose only concern it is, be the only Persons unconcern'd? How can we pretend to Wisdom any more, how can we value our selves upon our Discretion, to what purpose is it that we know any thing at all, if we are ignorant, or negligent in this only important great Affair?

It is a common saying amongst us, that a Man has done his business, when he has purchas'd a great Estate, or arrived to some eminent Degree of Honour in the World. How absurd a Speech is this! A Man has then done his business when he has no more to do; but what great Purchase is it for him to get to Day, what he may lose to Morrow? Or if he should keep it, yet he may prove neither the wiser nor the better for it.

And have we nothing else to do, but to pursue such Bubbles? Is this our business, to gape after such vanities as these? Have we not a Soul to be inform'd with Wisdom, which lies deep, and concealed from the ignorant and sloathful? Have we not a Mind to be brought in frame, in which are many obstinate and crooked

crooked knots, that make business enough for the labours of our whole life?

How many wild Extravagancies have we to be cured? And how many headstrong Passions to be reclaim'd? the Old Man to be mortifi'd within us, which is a work of much Agony, and mighty Conflict: And the new creature to be born again; which may chance to cost us many pangs and throwes.

And are these matters of so small concern, that we should think our business may be done without them; or are they of so little difficulty, that we should put him off from time to time, and in the mean while be mighty busie about things that are nothing to the purpose.

What is this, but acting like that Fool upon Record in the Gospel, who thought that his business too was done, and therefore bid his *Soul take its ease, because he had Goods laid up for many years*; when God knew he had not many hours to live.

He had indeed well furnish'd his Earns, but had made no provision for his Sepulchre: And therefore our Saviour;

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who

who was not us'd to give hard words, yet calls him nevertheless a Fool, tho his Barns were full, and his heart at ease.

And yet he was not so foolish neither, as they who give themselves no ease at all, and tho their Barns are never so full, yet they never know when they have enough.

This it is for the *Heathen not to know themselves*: This it is for the Children of this World not to know what is the chief End of Man: And yet foolish as they are in the Choice of their end, they are wiser in the Prosecution of it than the Children of Light; and therefore our Saviour sends us to them, to learn Wisdom in our Generation, and commands us to promote our spiritual, our eternal interest in Heaven, with the same vigour and application of mind, as they use to drive on their carnal mean designs on Earth: To *covet earnestly the best gifts*, and labour incessantly to grow Rich in Vertue, and to lay in such a stock of Grace as shall never fail us.

To

To this end we must frequently and faithfully examine our accounts, and take an exact particular of our Spiritual Estates, That we may daily supply whatsoever is wanting, and correct whatsoever is amiss, and be continually growing from strength to strength, till the Grace that is in us shall be consummated in Glory: That we may never leave off improving of our Talents, and increasing of our Stores, till God himself shall say unto our Soul, *Soul take thy ease, thou hast now Goods laid up for more than many years*, for a blessed eternity to come.

To which God of his great mercy bring us all, &c.

F 2 P S A L.

PSALM IX. 20.

*Put them in fear, O Lord, that the
Heathen may know themselves to be
but Men.*

FROM these words I have already shew'd you, what it is, and how good it is, for Men to *know themselves*: To consider the End for which God sent us into the World, and the means which he has given us to obtain it. 'Tis so necessary a knowledge, that without it we are not capable of knowing any thing to the purpose ; nay, we are hardly capable of knowing any thing at all ; but while we are here below, we must still wander in the dark, and carry our native ignorance with us to the Grave, and make this world ten times more a wilderness than ever God design'd it.

I have shew'd you , that the very ground-work of all Knowledge is to know what is the natural constitution of Man, and what it is that our pure simple genuine Nature does require: For want of which knowledge we naturally fall into Corruptions , and then cherish those corruptions as we would do our selves.

I have hinted also what these corrupted principles are, namely Ambition, Covetousness, and Lust; and that from these grounds all vicious practices grow upon us, barely for want of considering, how ill these Principles suit with our Nature, and how little these Practices conduce to our End: That is for want of *knowing our selves*.

It remains now that I shew you more particularly,

1. How these corrupted Principles of Ambition, Covetousness, and Lust, hinder this Knowledge in us.

2. How these hindrances are to be remov'd by the Fear of God: And

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1. The first Vice which dazels our eyes, and by casting a glaring light about us, hinders us from *knowing our selves*, is Ambition: A Vice to which mankind has indeed a natural inclination, and that which soonest shews it self: It was with this bait that the Devil tempted, and catch'd: the first Man, by perswading him that he should be *like God*: A temptation against which Innocency it self is very hardly proof.

There is a Principle of Greatness in our Hearts; and our Soul, which is derived from Heaven, is naturally mounting, and aspiring to that place from whence it came: Like the flame, it was made to ascend, and tho the *earthly tabernacle weighs it down* to the Earth, yet our minds will be soaring upwards, as naturally as the sparks themselves.

Now when these our desires are directed to a proper End, and take their rise from proper grounds, there is a Vertue in Ambition: And we may study to be like God in Wisdom, if we can; and in Goodness, if we please: But when nothing will please us but to be like him in Power, and we look upon our selves

to be above Restraint, then is our Ambition indeed a Vice ; there is vanity in the Inclination and danger in the attempt.

It was thus, that the Angels fell. Had they been contented with their lot, they had maintain'd their Station still : But for endeavouring to exalt themselves they were miserably degraded ; and from Heavenly Angels, they degenerated into accursed Spirits.

And yet, neither the Angels, nor our Forefathers Fall, can terrifie us from the like presumption ; but notwithstanding their disappointments, we will still be bordering upon their Guilt, and flattering our selves that we are something *more than Men* : First we learn to despise our fellow-creatures ; and from thence our Ambition takes a higher flight, and reaches us to defie our God : To value our selves upon rejecting his Commands ; and if we dare but be very wicked, we think our selves very great.

! This is the first inlet to Vice ; and whatsoever sin takes possession of our heart, it commonly enters in through the door

of Ambition. We think it a glorious thing to be Masters of our Selves : And so indeed it is, if we knew how to set about it : But an ambitious Man is so far from This, that he is a slave to his own Pride, the most insulting Master in the World.

'Tis this that runs him upon dangerous Projects, through false Hopes, and in the height of his expectation gives him up to ruin : Carries him up to the Top, to the Pinnacle of Fortune, and there shews him the Glories and Gaeties of the World, and having perswaded him that he shall be Honour'd, Courted, and Admir'd, at last throws him headlong down.

All these things will I bestow upon thee, said the Devil to the Son of God ; People shall worship thee, and Kingdoms shall fall down before thee. But then the terms upon which this Devil of Ambition covenants with us, are so ungenerous, and base, that they are below the Spirits of the Sons of Men. First we must be designing, and treacherous, and false as the Devil himself, and in one word, we must Worship Him, before the World will Worship Us.

And

And at last perhaps the tempter cannot make his word True ; but to be sure he cannot make it Good : For what wonderfull happiness, what mighty purchase is it, to gain the good opinion of the multitude : Or what are we the better in reality, because they think the better of us ?

Nay, how absurd and contradictory a thing is the desire of such a popular esteem ; that a Man should proudly think himself above the Vulgar, and then poorly submit to their Judgment, whether he is so or not : That he should undervalue, and despise the Persons of other Men, and at the same time Court their Opinion, and Applause.

If therefore the world should think well of us, that is no reason for us to think the better of our selves : either we may overvalue their Judgments, or they may overvalue our Deserts ; and though Honour is the undoubted birth-right of the people, yet Understanding belongs to another Court, and is of a quite different claim.

And

And yet for the sake of this Idol, this Fantom it is, that many Men are contented to sacrifice their own Peace, and the quietness of the World besides, and build vain-glorious Trophies to themselves, upon the ruines of other Men, only that they may stand a little higher in the eye and admiration of the People.

When a Man's Ambition leads him on, no Vertue is able to stand before him: Both Justice and Mercy, must give way to his violence, and *Jehu* like he drives furiously on, till he turns the World upside-down, or is overturn'd himself in the attempt. If he can but get the Superiority, and make himself appear like God, he cares not what destruction he brings upon Man, or how he disturbs the very course of Nature.

From hence all Tumults, and Factions, all Slaughters, and Desolations take their rise. When a pamper'd Ambition leads the way, Hatred and Malice, Rancour and Revenge follow after; all the poysonous qualities in nature, like an Army of destroying Angels, attend his Motions, and execute his Designs.

And

And can any Man pretend to *know himself* ; who ventures upon such an enterprize. With such arms as these, *Lucifer*, and his associates, might make a feeble War upon the living God; but who are we, poor breathless, heartless Creatures, that we should hope for better Success in such attempts, where the Prince of the Air himself, and the very Powers of Heaven were discomfited.

How easily are we crush'd in the height of all our Pride? God need not take his Thunder to cast us down: One blast of Air will do our work, one breath of his displeasure will undo us. Nay, if he does but withhold our breath, we die, and all our enterprizes fall with us to the ground.

Is this our Glory, is this our Pride! How contemptible a thing is designing Man, who mistakes his Honour, and mislays his Design, and does not know himself: Does not know that *there is neither Device nor Wisdom in the Grave, whether he is going.*

If we would be great indeed, we must take the Wise Mans advice, *My Son glorifie thy Soul in meekness, and give it honour*

honour according to the dignity thereof; Such as is agreeable to the excellency both of its Nature and its End. Let us not rejoyce in flattering our selves, that we are like Gods upon Earth, but that our names are written in the Book of Heaven. Let us not boast that we have made our party strong, and many Men are subject to our Will; but that we have over-come the perverseness of our Will, and subdued our unruly Passions, and are grown so Wise as to know, and so Great as to Command our selves. That we have gain'd such a superiority, such an ascendent over this World, that we can now despise those very Honours, which formerly we courted with so much Hazard and Expence.

2. The second corrupted Principle which debauches our Nature, and hinders us from *knowing our selves*, is Covetousness, or an immoderate love of Wealth: A vice that is all meer Ignorance and Shame, without any mixture of commendation.

It must be confess'd that there is something of Generosity in Ambition; but Covetousness is purely Vile and Sordid.

Am.

Ambition is an over-flowing of the spirit, but Covetousness sinks us below the flesh: 'Tis being before hand with our death, burying our selves alive, and anticipating that Curse which God pronounc'd upon us, *Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.*

Ambition was an entertainment, a temptation to *Adam* himself, even when he was in Paradise: but Covetousness is a dishonour to fallen Man; 'tis drudging in the Quarries, and condemning our selves forever to the Mines.

It is a mistake to think that we are *more*, but not so bad as to make our selves *less than Man*: Nay, less than the Worms themselves, and lower in esteem than the lowest of all the Creatures: They only grovel in the Dust, to satisfy their Nature, and provide themselves with present Food; but Covetous Man, rakes without Measure, and scrapes without Design, and never thinks he has got dust enough, till he returns to dust himself; His appetite is never satisfied with it, till his very mouth is stop'd.

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'Tis this that occasions all that Fraud, Extortion, Oppression, and Falsehood that is practis'd amongst us. *Covetousness is the root of all those evils*, and very deadly is its Fruit. But 'tis strange, that a Man of such a narrow Soul, who contracts his concerns within so small a compass as his own private interest, and is an utter stranger to all mankind besides, should yet be such a stranger also to himself; that he should not know what it is to be a Man, nor how to answer the ends of Humane Nature.

It is indeed the property of a Plant, to grow: And it is the commendation of a Beast, to thrive: But what is Man the better for such sordid gross Improvements? All the growth that is commendable in us, is to improve our Wisdom, and to grow in Grace, and by this Grace to rise from strength to strength, till our Spirits are so heighten'd and refin'd, that they may be fit to appear before God amongst the glorifi'd Spirits above.

This is the great End of Man: But how is this end promoted, by our growing Rich? All our labour of this kind tends

tends the direct contrary way ; 'tis only delving into the deep, when our thoughts should be soaring up on high : 'Tis stifling our Souls under-ground, and damping our Spirits in the Mines.

Therefore get *Wisdom*, saies the Wise Man, and with *all thy getting*, get *Understanding* : for *Wisdom is much better than Gold, and Understanding, rather to be chosen than Silver*. 'Tis much better for the Soul, no doubt ; and if we did but *know our selves*, we should know That is our better Part. Nay, doubtless 'tis much better for our Body too, which can only be cloy'd with over-much, but is satisfi'd with very little : And yet that little is more than a Covetous Man is willing to bestow upon himself. Though *he rise up early, and late takes rest* ; yet he grudges himself that very *bread of carefulness*, which he has got with all this ado.

And now, should we ask this thriving Man what he is the better for all his thrift, 'tis more than he can tell. He thinks himself the Richer for it, yet still he does but think so, and even that is all that he desires.

So many Absurdities, and Contradictions are involv'd in this one single Vice, that if we did not see it practis'd, we could hardly believe the thing : That a Man should labour for he knows not what, and save it for he knows not whom. If we look upon his Income, he would seem the most selfish Man in Nature : But if we consider his Expence, he is certainly the most Self-denying Man alive.

But, 3. There is yet another powerful principle of Vice within us, which hinders us from *knowing of our selves*; and from pursuing our proper end, and that is Lust, or an immoderate, intemperate desire of Pleasure, and gratifying our selves in all things, which we take, or mistake to be delightful to us.

For Lust does not only proceed from a deprav'd Will, but from an erroneous Judgment too. Whatsoever gives a little present satisfaction to our Senses, we presently conclude it Good, and then prosecute it with all our Might. We will not be at the pains, to examine the Nature and Consequence of the
G thing :

thing ; but like our unfortunate fore-fathers, we take a superficial appearance, and blind promise, for abundant satisfaction. If we find it *pleasant to the eye*, we conclude it will be so also to the taste; and if we find it tastes well too, we doubt not but it will prove *good for food*, and so swallow it without regret.

There is nothing in the world so easie to be catch'd, and so readily impos'd upon, as a Man of Pleasure : For he judges of all things only by his Sense, and Sense is the most deceitful Judge in Nature : It is indeed the Accomplishment of a Beast, but 'tis the blind side and Reproach of Man.

How shameful a sight is it, to see a Man set aside his Reason, and Vertue, his Understanding, and Religion, and devote himself wholly to a sloathful sensual life : to be so much unacquainted with himself, as to forget that he has a Soul, and employ all his time to entertain his Body.

Nay, 'tis but an indifferent entertainment neither : To be still plying it with varieties, and caressing it with the choicest deli-

delicacies, as long as their season lasts, shews how hideous a life the Epicure must lead, till the next season comes, till he has got either a new Appetite to his palled Pleasure, or new Pleasures to his palled Appetite.

And where is the satisfaction of smothering our selves in beds of Down: Where is the delight of soothing our flesh with Softness, and Ease, so long till at last it has lost its sense. As it was observ'd of the *Lacedaemonians* of old, that they us'd their bodies to so much hardship, that at length they grew insensible of Pain: So these Men, on the contrary, soften themselves so much, till they grow insensible of Pleasure. Or at most all the entertainment they have, is but like that of a sluggard, when between sleeping and waking, he cries out, *yet a little slumber, yet a little sleep*: Not that he has any sense of pleasure in his sleep, but only 'tis a torment to him to be awaken'd.

Thus we get into a habit of sensuality, before we are aware, and then approve of it we know not why: And though we have but little satisfaction in

this course of life, yet 'tis death to us to think of changing it for another.

I would not be thought to undertake so fruitless, so unnecessary a work, as to perswade Men out of Pleasure in general; since God not only allows us in it, but has allotted it to our use, and bids us rejoice in our Lot: And our satisfaction is what he himself takes pleasure in, as well as we.

Neither would I be understood to condemn absolutely even the pleasures of Sense, or to set Nature and Religion more at odds than ever God intended: for fear it should be said, and with good reason too, *wilt thou put out the eyes of this people.*

My only intention is to shew, that what we commonly call Pleasure, is really no such thing; nothing but a childish fluttering state of life, too light to last, and too airy to build any solid satisfaction upon: We like it, because we think it agreeable to our Nature; but 'tis a great mistake to think it so: It debauches our Nature first, before we can approve it; and then, what we look upon

upon to be our Nature, is in truth nothing but our corruption: And through this mistake we first suffer our selves to be corrupted, and then destroy'd: What we account upon as necessary to our Health and Strength, is nothing in effect but nourishing our Disease: A Dropsie it is, that may be pleas'd perhaps by being fed, but never can be cured.

And therefore, since our Pleasures are not to be extinguish'd in us, 'tis absolutely necessary that they should be well regulated, and reform'd: And to do this, so as that our pleasure may be agreeable, not only to our Sense, but also to those higher principles of Reason, and Religion, and may prove consistent with our Happiness, there are three Rules to be critically observ'd.

1. As to their kind, that we should not fancy to our selves, that there is no pleasure unless it be in forbidden fruit; when there are other Trees in the Garden, as good for food, and more secure: And this we must know, if we *know our selves*, that our joys are never full and

satisfactory, but when they are Commendable and Vertuous too.

2. We must regulate them also as to their degree, and keep them within their proper bounds, as knowing, that there can be neither Vertue, nor so much as Satisfaction, where there is excess. That nothing can be pleasant, but what is moderate withal: That just measure must be observ'd, even in lawful things, and superfluity does not recruit, but ruin Nature.

3. There is a rule also to be observ'd in the first design, and intention of our pleasures; and that is, that we do not chuse them barely for the pleasures sake, but for some other, some higher end; to support our nature, and encourage us in the exercises of Religion: Without which, we may observe the two former Rules, and yet be Luxurious and Vicious still.

A meer Epicure may chuse his pleasure right, and may husband it well, and all with a design to heighten his enjoyment, and be more exquisite in his delights.

delights : Yet still he is an Epicure, and void of Vertue, notwithstanding all his Prudence, and Moderation.

A good Man uses pleasure for his diversion ; but this Man chuses it for his employment : The one makes it only a refreshment to his Body, the other makes it the only business of his Life, the joy of his very Soul : And then 'tis no commendation, if he does not fall into excess; and it is no wonder, if he does : For he knows so little of himself, that he suffers his nature to be corrupted : But yet he knows so much of himself, that he is not willing it should be destroy'd.

Thus we have consider'd the three vicious corrupted principles within us, which make us forsake the Law of our Nature, and the Commandments of our God, and keep us from *knowing of our selves*, Ambition, Covetousness and Lust.

With one, or other of these Vices, every Man in some measure is possess'd : And it is as much as our Salvation is worth to know which of them it is,

and to what degree; that we may know how to correct that humour which is predominant, and apply proper remedies to our peculiar Disease.

To reflect upon our sinfulness in general, does very little good : But when we can point to our own darling sin, and lay our finger upon that very point where our Death, and Danger lies : when we know our selves, and our particular case so well, that we can say, *Thou art the Man*, and this is thy bane ; this will startle a sinner, and make him bethink himself for life, how to stop the growing malady before it turns to a fatal gangreen.

Upon the whole matter, we cannot but observe of all these vices, that though they may divert us for a time, and give us some present deceitful satisfaction, yet they can never settle us in a state of Ease and Happiness, because they put us in a tottering condition, and out of our proper place.

An Ambitious Man is above himself, a Covetous Man is below himself, and a Luxurious Man is beside himself. On-

ly the vertuous contented Man is Master of himself. He is the only Man, that, under all the turnings of Fortune and windings of the World, maintains his station, and stands his ground. He knows himself too well to give way to Vice in either of the extremes, and knows that either of them may be his ruine.

Therefore he neither flies too high through a vain Ambition, nor descends too low through Covetousness, or sensual Lust. He neither starves his body by unreasonable thrift, nor choaks it by unseasonable prodigality: But with an equal temper of Mind, and a perfect indifference to the things below, he enjoys the Smiles, and dispises the Frowns of Fortune; and is undisturb'd at the course of this World, because he has a dearer concern, a separate interest in the World to come: Is unmov'd by the chances and motions of this Transitory Life, because he knows he has a better Portion in that *abiding City*.

Should such a Man, so establisht in his Vertue, and settled in his Principles, but look down upon the common practices

etices of the World, and seriously reflect upon their Folly: Would his better Thoughts, his diviner Contemplations, but give him leave to see, with what eagerness, and hurry, and zeal, the Men of this World run about to undo themselves, and others, trample upon the necks of Friend and Foe alike, and all to promote some little pauntry vile designs; how would he stand amaz'd at this World, and conclude that Hell it self could not be a viler place.

When he sees with what Fury, and Malice, and Revenge, they prosecute all those that dare oppose the interests of their Ambition, Covetousness, or Lust, how earnestly would he pray, that God would deliver him from such a Savage Race. God send me to a quieter retreat, to the Woods, and Forests, where I may converse with tamer Beasts, and find more humanity amongst the Herd. How zealously would he wish for some private retirement, where he may enjoy calmer days, and cooler thoughts, and in perfect serenity of mind, may taste the sweets, and relish the joys, of a quiet Conscience, and a favourable God.

In

In this happy state of Life he finds Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures in abundance; enough to satisfy the utmost of his Ambition, and to answer his most craving desires: Such Pleasures as the sensual Man never heard of, such Riches as the Covetous Man never saw, and such Honours as the Ambitious Man is never like to see: Perfect Peace and tranquility of Mind, undoubted security and establishment of Heart, are the certain portion of that Man who *knows himself, and fears his God.*

But the misfortune is, when Men have neither the fear of God, nor the knowledge of themselves, how then can they be reduced? how is it possible to reclaim their Vice, and bring them to a sense of their condition, when there is no ground for Vertue to work upon? Indeed 'tis more than Man can do, humane perswasion can do no good; yet still God *has not left himself without a witness*, nor us without a remedy. He can reclaim us from the last extremity, though we are never so corrupt: *Put them in fear, O Lord*, and then the Heathen must *know themselves to be but men*: Which was

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The last thing propos'd. When God cloathes himself with Majesty, and takes his Terrors upon him, the stiffest neck must bend, and the stoutest heart must yield. However we may dally with his Mercies, yet there is no withstanding his Justice, no resisting of his Power. However we have hardned and fortify'd our selves in sin, yet fear will either find, or make a way into our hearts.

Indeed, the most natural kindly way of instilling this fear into us, is by the preaching of God's holy word: a standing ordinance, which God has appointed in his Church, on purpose to bring our sins to our remembrance, and make us sensible of our danger: To set our transgressions in open light, and shew our folly in its proper colours, and make us virtuous either for fear, or shame: To touch us in the disaffected part, and pierce us to the very quick, to that sin, whatsoever it is, that lies nearest to our heart, and has got possession of our Soul.

This is that word of God which must cast it out, that powerful charm which must dispossess it: This is that good seed
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which our Saviour sows, for the cultivating and enriching of our Souls, and planting religious principles within us. This is that fruitful shower of which *Moses* speaks, *My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew*, to impregnate the seeds of Vertue, and bring them to maturity.

But if it falls upon barren ground, if our Ambition, our Covetousness, or our Lusts, have so far got the ascendant of Religion, that this word can make no impression upon us, and we can hear it without conviction or concern; then God finds other ways to work upon us, but such ways as we shall quickly be weary of.

Tho' our hearts are never so hardened, yet two Arrows there are that will be sure to reach us; Calamity, and Death. when they speak to us in the name of God, they command our attention, and speak so plain, that we cannot chuse but hear.

And, 1. Calamity is one effectual method which God uses to make us *know ourselves*. When he strips us of all our gay, gawdy plumes, and sends us out despicable,

spicable and naked, as we were born, into that World where before we prided our selves so much, and feather'd our nest so well ; then we shall not only know our selves, but despise our selves besides, then we shall see all the crookedness of our Nature, the deformity of our Souls, and condemn our own folly, that we have provided no better covering for our selves, but such as every breath of wind may blow away.

When poverty and shame come upon us both at once, and deprive us of that Armour which our Ambition and Covetousness had put upon us, then we shall cast about for some better weapons of defence, some stronger hold, that shall stand out against the shocks of Fortune, and be impregnable against all the assaults of Hell. Then how shall we wish for the *breast-plate of righteousness*, and the *sword of the spirit*, and confess that one grain of Faith, is better than many talents of Gold and Silver ; better than all that pomp, which our Ambition can desire ; or all that Treasure which either our Covetousness can rake up, or our Luxury throw away.

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When our haughty looks shall be brought down, and all our deceitful honours laid in the dust, we shall no more trust to the smiles of Fortune, nor believe the flatteries of Men ; but learn to state our own accounts, impartially examine the condition of our Souls, and see how frail a thing is Man, who does not chuse Vertue for his ornament, and God for his defence.

Prosperity is deceitful ; our enjoyments and hopes do but transport us beyond our selves : only adversity removes all the rubbish of the world, that lay about us, gives us a full view, and free access to our own bosom, and shews us whatsoever is there amiss ; it corrects the swellings of our heart, asswages the over-flowing of our pride, and proves plainly to us, that there is no true genuine pleasure, but in being vertuous ; no solid greatness, but in being humble : that the way to be men indeed, is to *know our selves to be but Men.*

While our attendants are numerous, and our party strong, while a crowd of people flock about us, and nothing sounds in our ears, but the applauses of a deluded

ded and deluding multitude; how is it possible for us to hear the voice of reason, or to see our way before us? But when a storm has removed these Caterpillars from us, silenc'd their noise, and left us to stand alone, then we shall have a clearer prospect of our way, and a truer knowledge of our selves, and see the errors into which our false Friends betray'd us.

There is enchantment in a luxurious easie state of life, that locks up our Judgment, and leaves us not so much as our own senses at command, but when our fortunes are reduc'd, then we *come un-*
to our selves, then the Prodigal returns indeed.

But lastly, The other recourse that God has to reclaim us, the last method of Providence to make us *know our selves*, is Death. When this sad spectacle comes upon us, and holds his glass before our eyes; and there shews us our own ghastly face; tho' at first perhaps it may appear to us very unlike that lofty, that sprightly thing, which we took our selves to be, in the days of our mirth and vigour, yet to our sorrows, we shall quickly be convinc'd.

vinc'd. Then we shall see of what we are made, and to what we must return. When this body of ours, upon which we have bestowed so much pains, and treated it at the expence of our precious Soul, is now sinking into nothing, and all our Pride and Pleasure dies before us, *then let us say that we are Gods in the hands of him that slays us.*

Tho' all other Arguments should fail, yet this is an undeniable demonstration of our infirmity. We might say, perhaps, *That we are Gods, but that we die like Men*, and the Grave convinces us that we are dust and ashes.

To what purpose then should we drive on mighty Projects; and lay vast Designs, when, for ought we know, death may overtake us in the height of our vanity, and stifle our Ambition in the birth. How tame and inoffensive a thing is Man, when death has laid his hands upon him! Who then would expose himself to the anger of God, and the contempt of Man, by a feeble Malice, an impotent Revenge, when he knows not how soon he may fall into that Pit himself, which he digg'd for another man.

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There is not one sin, or insolence in our nature, against which Death does not supply us with an antidote, the very apprehension of it checks our extravagance, and allays our heats, overrules our unruly Will, and suppresses our vicious Affections, and so brings our hearts into temper, and our minds in frame.

But then we must take up these apprehensions in time, and apply the antidote before it is too late, before death it self lays hold upon us ; otherwise it will prove not our cure, but our punishment. It will not lead us to a new life, but carry us to a dreadful Judgment, where we shall be made to *know our selves*, to our eternal shame, and the doctrine of terrors will convince us with a Vengeance.

From which, good Lord, deliver us.

A
SERMON
UPON
EASTER-DAY.

2 P E T. III. 11.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved; what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness—looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.

THE Resurrection of the Dead, which is the Subject of my Text, and of this Days Meditation, is the most powerful of all those Motives, whereby God endeavours to
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plant the fear of his name within us, and bring us to lead religious lives: Like the hand of *Elisba*, it cuts off them that have escap'd the Sword of *Hazael* and *Jebu*; and tho we could harden our selves against the sense of Calamities, and the apprehensions of Death, yet there is no defence against the thoughts of Judgment.

This is indeed the Center of all Religion, the main point to which all spiritual precepts tend; 'tis our Faith in this point that supports our hope, 'tis our hope of this that encourages our Obedience, and enables us to run through all the difficulties of this Life, in a full assurance of better things in the life to come. 'Tis this Doctrine alone that restrains the extravagancy of Men, and keeps them within the bounds of Reason: Puts a curb upon the looseness of their Will, and gives check to their unruly Affections, and moderates all their courses with the powerful motives of both Hope and Fear; without which there could be no security for Virtue, no restraint for Vice: In a word, without the belief of a Resurrection, there could be neither Religion, nor Government in the World.

And yet this great important truth was a secret in the World, till our Saviour came, and was reserv'd for the most noble discovery of the Gospel: The Gentiles made some imperfect guesses at it, and the *Jews* saw it darkly through a Veil; only to the Christian Church, the Son of God, rising from the Dead, *brought life and immortality to light*: This day the glorious Secret was reveal'd, this day the Son of Man did visibly *bruise the Serpents head*, and in his Person we saw our nature break loose from the bonds of Death, and triumph over all the Powers of Hell.

Our Saviours Resurrection was the fore-runner of our own; he was the first fruits, the Specimen of that universal harvest which is to follow, when the seeds of all flesh shall be gathered together, the grain to be treasur'd up in the mansions of Heaven, and the Tares to be committed to everlasting fire. Then this whole frame of nature, which now looks so beautiful and compact, shall be dissolv'd: The Heavens over our head shall be as a shriveled Parchment, and the Earth under us like melting wax,

and there shall be no more room either for sinful enjoyments or foolish hopes; no delightful vallies to entertain us, no Rocks or Mountains to cover us, but the Earth it self shall be burnt up, and all the works that are therein. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolv'd, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and Godliness, &c.*

From which words I shall speak.

I. Of the nature of this universal Resurrection, this Day of God, as 'tis call'd in my Text, when *all these things shall be dissolv'd.*

2. Of the certainty of it, which is here express'd as a thing evident and undeniable, *seeing then that all these things shall be dissolv'd.*

3. Of the consequence of it, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness.*

1. The general Resurrection is here described by the dissolution of all things now in being, which shall happen in that Day of God, that great period of the world.

world, when nature shall cease to perform her work, and God shall bring about an universal revolution ; when the whole frame and contexture of things shall fail, the Sinews which support it shall be loos'd, and the Elements, of which it is compos'd, shall melt away.

In this our day, we find that seed time and harvest have their due returns, and by a successive Generation God renews the face of the Earth ; but in that day of God, Generation it self shall fail, and all things must give way to a final, total change ; now time and chance happen to all things below, and give us daily instances of a particular Resurrection ; but then time it self shall be swallowed up in a vast eternity, and the world will be brought to its last Crisis, never to be renew'd or alter'd more.

This very Earth, upon which we build our happiness, with all the present beauty and riches of it, shall melt away, and the ground shall fail from under us ; to discover the vanity of those worldly men who labour for such a slippery inheritance, and build a house that has no foundation.

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This body of ours, which we now entertain with so much cost and care, this body, the most curious Fabrick in the World, which for its beauty looks as if it were design'd for a better place than the grave, yet must be transform'd into common dust, and this dust it self must be dissolv'd, and from thence another spiritual body will arise, perhaps of a quite different Make, but doubtless, with very different Inclinations; and in that body we must receive what we have done in this.

Whatsoever sins and vanities we have committed in the Flesh, must then be accounted for; and though this flesh of ours shall be dissolv'd, tho' Heaven and Earth shall pass away, yet the sins of our Soul will still stand upon record against us, and not one of our thoughts shall perish; a new Heaven, and a new Earth shall arise out of the ruins of the old; but of what fashion we cannot tell, or what our portion shall be in it, we cannot foresee; As to this, God has left us in suspense, and death has drawn a curtain before our eyes, and for what shall happen to us beyond the grave, we must trust

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to the mercies of God, and the merits of our great Redeemer.

From this uncertainty of our future state it is, that this day of God, when *all things shall be dissolved*, is sometimes call'd a day of hopes, and sometimes a day of fear; according as we behave our selves in this Life, so we stand affected to the other, and the prospect of it gives us divers passions, different concerns.

When we think of God's Justice, where-with he will then judge the World, we cannot chuse but tremble and be afraid; when we think upon his mercy, that tenderness which he has for all mankind, we are encourag'd and reviv'd again; as he is our Judge, he strikes us with terror; as he is our Redeemer, he gives us consolation.

When we reflect upon our sins, we are troubled, and to our sorrow must confess that we deserve the severest death; but when we consider his sufferings, we see our ransom paid, and may joyfully expect a Resurrection to Life.

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By these various motions, God quickens our endeavours, and puts life into our Religion, by giving us some reasonable hopes, and yet leaving something for us still to fear. *He turneth Man to destruction, and again he saith, Come again, ye children of men;* and though he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, yet he is of a tenderer heart, than to let every iniquity be our ruine. And therefore when that great day shall come, that God will Judge the World in righteousness, no doubt but Justice will hold the balance, and yet mercy will turn the Scale.

These are the apprehensions which we now have of the day of Judgment, but how great our resentments shall be then, how transporting our Joys, or how amazing our fears and sorrows, is impossible for us to describe. Humane Agonies, and Raptures too, may be conceiv'd perhaps, but cannot be express'd; how much less can we express the joys, or the sorrows of the other World, either of which is too great for the *heart of Man to conceive*. And therefore I proceed to the

2d. Thing

2d. Thing propos'd, viz. what certainty we have of the thing it self, upon what assurance it is that the Apostle so confidently affirms it, as an evident undoubted truth, *seeing then that all these things shall be dissolv'd.*

And here we might appeal to the general sentiments of all mankind, even to the opinion of the Heathens themselves, that this present System of the World must some time or other be destroy'd by fire, *Communis mundo superest rokus.* We might appeal to the light of Nature, and make our own reason to be Judge, which tells us there must needs be a day of Vengeance, and a day of Rewards to come, since we see that Justice is not speedily executed here. We might appeal to those secret apprehensions, those invincible Testimonies of this truth, which we bear within us ; and a certain present instinct leads us to the belief of a future Judgment. But to depend upon such proofs as these, is to disparage our Religion, and lessen the Authority of the word of God ; what he promises we can no longer doubt. When he speaks, modesty forbids us to interpose our Judgment

ment in the case, when he proclaims the truth, what need we farther witness? Our own senses are not more convincing and as *Abraham* said to the rich Man in torment, there is so much evidence in the Holy Scripture, that they who *will not believe Moses and the Prophets*, *will not be persuaded, tho' one should arise from the dead.*

But it may be said perhaps, that *Moses* and the Prophets are obscure in the point of the Resurrection, and that these truths were but blindly delivered in the days of Old. And yet so perfect is the harmony between the Old Testament and the New, that even there we find most evident Marks and Characters of *Jesus and the Resurrection*. The whole current of the Prophecies runs this way, the whole *Æconomy* of the Law speaks nothing else, and though their words perhaps were not so easie to be apply'd, untill the Prophecies, and the Laws were fullfilled, yet now that the Veil of *Moses* is taken off, and the Gospel has put a gloss upon him, we can no longer doubt of those mysterious truths, since we see them thus enlightned.

Now

Now we see plainly that *Canaan* was a type of Heaven, and passing over *Jordan*, an emblem of the Resurrection ; and *Jesus* the Son of *Nun*, who conducted the people over, was but a figure of *Jesus* the *Messiah* , who has opened for us the gate of everlasting life, and is gone in triumphantly before us.

Now we know what *the sure mercies of David are* ; and since the Son of *David* is risen from the dead, we understand the meaning of those words of his, *Thou shalt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither shalt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption.*

Now we can no longer make a doubt of our own Resurrection, since our blessed Saviour, the second *Adam*, as he is call'd, in whose person the whole humane nature was once more combin'd, the whole race of mankind was entirely represented, did apparently rise from the dead, and shew'd himself openly to the World, that we might have a demonstration of our immortality, an undeniable, infallible, sensible proof, that our
Souls

Souls can never die, and our bodies shall be raised up again.

This is an evidence past all contradiction, a testimony beyond controul : And he that will not believe neither *Moses*, nor the *Prophets*, nor yet one that is actually *risen* from the dead, his unbelief does not proceed from want of evidence, but only from want of inclination.

The truth is, it is not so much a Resurrection of the Dead, as a Resurrection unto Judgment, which the sinner excepts against, and even this notion agrees well enough with his understanding, but only 'tis disagreeable to his Will. His life has been such, that it cannot stand the Tryal, and then he would fain perswade himself that there is no such thing ; and for this his groundless wish, as we may call it, rather than his opinion, he has found out these two pretences, which the Apostle mentions in this Epistle.

1. That the coming of our Lord Jesus unto Judgment is *a cunningly devis'd fable*, and therefore wants sufficient ground.

2. That

2. That notwithstanding the promise of his coming, yet *all things continue still as they were from the beginning*, and therefore this opinion wants better confirmation.

In return to which, I shall not, I need not give a full and serious answer, for that is doing too much honour to a frivolous absurd objection: but I shall only shew the inconsistency of this sort of proof, and how these very Arguments destroy themselves.

As, 1. 'Tis pretended that the coming of our Lord to Judgment *is a cunningly devis'd fable*, or in the Language of our times, A contrivance of Priests, and Politicians, to keep the World in awe. And certainly, if the Case stands thus, that the World cannot be kept in awe without it, it is not the Politician, but God that is the Contriver of it, and therefore out of his own mouth the sinner will be condemn'd.

Who

Who should be more concerned for the good Government of the World, than he that made it. *He that made the eye shall not be see, he that nurtureth the Heathen, and teacheth man knowledge, shall not be punish*? Since therefore, by the Sinners own confession, nothing but the apprehensions of future punishment can secure the present peace of Man, doubtless that God, *who has done whatsoever pleased him in Heaven and Earth*, has taken effectual care to preserve his Government from contempt, and will not be out-done by his own Creatures, in the prudent management of the World. And therefore, how cunningly soever the sinner may pretend this Doctrine to be contriv'd, yet this I am sure is a very ill contriv'd objection.

And the 2d. is as bad, *That since all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation, therefore the promise of our Saviour's coming is not true, (i.e.)* because wickedness abounds and flourishes in the world, and Judgment is not speedily and visibly executed upon the scoffing sinner, therefore he thinks there is no Judgment at all to come.

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Whereas indeed the direct contrary of this is true, and the inference holds strongly on the other side ; that because the sinner is not punish'd here, therefore he will be sure to receive his doom hereafter ; because he lives at ease in this life, he will be tormented in the next. Since God permits this World to take its course; and all things to continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation, doubtless he will make good the promise of his coming, and execute that Justice upon a sinner in another Life, which he has escap'd in this.

But if an argument drawn from our present ease and security, is good, 'tis as good against Death as against Judgment, and he might affirm as well, that because *he is lusty and strong, and comes in no fear of Death like other Men*, therefore he shall never die.

So perverse a thing is Vice, that it not only corrupts our heart, but weakens our Head, and debauches our Understanding, makes a downright absurdity pass for Sense, and draws an Argument

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ment out of that which is indeed its own consolation.

We have seen the weakness of these pleas, and yet these are all the pleas that a Scoffer has to abett him in his unbelief: All but his Vice, which is in truth his only Reason, but such a Reason as he is a sham'd to own, and therefore those other Arguments are not the true cause of his quarrel to Religion, but only his pretence; and whatever colour we find at top, yet a vicious life is always at the bottom of his plea; and therefore he labours to stifle the apprehensions of a future Judgment, because he knows that he cannot endure it.

How much more piously was it said of an honest Heathen, *that if his belief of another life was an error, yet 'twas such an error as he would never part with while he liv'd.* How much more prudently would it be done of us, to alter these practices which are within our power, and comply with those Divine Decrees which are unalterable: To forsake this fondness for our sins, which make us so averse to the thoughts of Judgment, and to raise up our lives to the heights of our

our Religion, and not labour, and labour in vain, to bring down our Religion to the level of our sinful lives. Seeing then that all these things must be so, let us not foolishly set our selves against them, but consider *what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness* ; Which is

The last and main thing to be spoken of, *viz.* what is the natural consequence of this Belief, what effect it ought to have upon our Lives and Practice.

And here it must needs be confess'd, that considering the mighty advantages which a Christian enjoys above all other Men, the certain Demonstration which we have of a future Judgment, there is no sort, no degree of holy conversation and godliness, that may not reasonably be expected from us. There is no encouragement to Vertue which we want, no ill consequence of Vice that we are ignorant of, but our way is plainly scor'd out before us, and we can't complain for want either of strength to perform the journey, or directions to find it out.

We see the two roads of Vice and Vertue, where they part, and how they end : The joys that are ready to receive us when we have finish'd the Christian Race, and the Terroures that threaten us at the bottom of the broad way : And then what satisfaction can we take in going down the Hill ? If we will run our selves upon Death and Destruction, when Life and Happiness are in our view, 'tis a stupid choice, a miserable exchange, but we must blame our selves only for it, *For why will ye die O house of Israel.*

How can we chuse a dungeon, a bottomless pit, for our habitation, when God invites us to a Throne ; when he so plainly forewarns us of our danger, why do we refuse to be inform'd ; when he so kindly calls us unto happiness, why should we not as gladly come ?

What insuperable difficulties, what Lions do we fancy in the way, or what fantastical pleasures do we conceive out of it, that should pervert and carry us aside ; what conditions has God annex'd to our reward, but only an easie duty, to walk

walk in a holy Conversation and Godliness ; and who would not study to do this of his own accord, tho' there was no reward annext unto it.

But when we are directed to our duty by a most gracious God, and solicited to it by the constant importunity of our own hopes and fears, who would think that we could set aside all these powerful motives, to comply with the sinful entertainments of this World, and the insignificant pleasures of the flesh.

If we knew no better, our sin was the more excusable, and our extravagance the less to be wondred at. But since we stedfastly believe, as we daily profess, that there will be a Resurrection of the dead, and a life in the World to come, how strange is it that we should forfeit our eternal interest in that life, for a little perishing delight in this, and Sacrifice our immortal Soul to the humour of a short liv'd body.

Since the day of the Lord is coming, a day that will be terrible and severe upon wicked men, why do we not take care to come well prepar'd, that we may escape

scape the terror, and meet the Lord with joy. Since we know that *all these things shall be dissolv'd*, why should we build all our happiness upon such a Foundation, as we our selves know must fall.

It is not without particular reason that Saint *Peter*, drawing an argument for our holy conversation from that great *day of God*, does not describe it by the usual circumstance, of a Resurrection from the dead, or a day of Judgment, but by this important significant expression, that then *all these things shall be dissolved*. A Resurrection of the dead may happen, and the sinner may hope for the same conversation still, the same entertainment of Riches, and Pleasures, and a sensual Paradise, in the other World.

A day of Judgment may come, and yet he may hope to pass his accounts, and continue the same *manner of person* that he was, the same desires to be gratified, and the same wants to be supply'd, and the same objects to supply them with.

But the consideration that *all these things shall be dissolv'd*, cuts off all his hopes, and puts him effectually upon a new course of life : shews him that he must shortly be stript of all this garniture, where-with he has now so gorgeously bedeckt himself, and puts this melancholy question to him, how his Soul will look when it comes to be unfurnished, or what other ornaments he has prepared for it when these must be laid aside ?

To be turned loose into a new unknown World, and there appear all naked, and deform'd besides, is such a mortifying thing, that the very thoughts of it will force us to make some better, and more lasting provision for our selves.

To think that the World it self shall perish, this World, for which we have been so zealously contending all this while, is a most effectual argument to baffle our Covetousness, and teach us to set our affection upon better things.

To think that our very body, for whose sake we covet these Worldly Goods, shall it self be dissolv'd, and melt away, is a powerful remedy against our Lusts, and shews us how vain a thing it is to labour for the food that perishes, and to provide that food for a body that cannot last, and to place our happiness in sensual pleasures, when not only the object, but the very subject of them must come to nothing.

And now, if the consideration of the great day of God has but subdued our Covetousness, and Lust, there is nothing more that can stand between us and a holy conversation; but that we may use the World for our convenience, and part with it again in peace: whatsoever our portion in it is, we may look upon it providently, as a thing that was given us for our present sustenance; but indifferently withal, as a thing that is to be dissolv'd, and taken from us; therefore we must receive it thankfully, as a Gift, but enjoy it piously, as the gift of God.

And

And thus if we are not over fond of the conveniences of this life, there is no great danger that they should over-lay our Vertue. Then we may nourish our flesh, without indulging the Lusts thereof; and in the cleanly, decent enjoyment of God's gifts, we may distinguish between the pleasure and the sin. We may be easie in our diversions, and yet not remiss; reserv'd in our conversation, and yet not severe; we may retain our Chastity, without Moroseness; and exercise our freedom without excess.

And this I take to be the meaning of a *holy conversation* in my text, to live conversationally, and amicably, as amongst Men, but holily withal, as in the sight of God; to have always a prospect of Heaven, while we are upon Earth; and duly to divide our time, between the offices of Civility and Religion, between the concerns of this World and the next.

This is the duty which our Christianity imposes on us, to the performance of which, we are not only oblig'd, but enabled also by the means of our Religion; and the consideration of that great day
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of God, both shews us what manner of persons we ought to be, and teaches us how to be so. It restrains the perverseness of our Will, and over-rules the extravagance of our affections, by taking off our thoughts from those things which shall be dissolved, and those actions which shall be punish'd.

It makes us circumspect and watchful in our lives, zealous and fervent in our devotion, always *looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.* There is the end of a Christians race, there is the prize which he always keeps in view, and while he *sets God before his eyes he can never fall.* This is the great duty, and peculiar advantage of our Religion; and 'tis so much the more our duty, because in case of failure we are answerable, not only for the faults which we have committed, but also for the many advantages of Grace which we have lost, and the great means of vertue which we have misemployed, and then *what manner of persons ought we to be?*

But to this it may perhaps be objected, where then is the benefit of our Religion, when the hazard which it puts upon

upon us, is an equal Balance to the gains ; for as it increales the means of Grace, so it enlarges the necessity of Vertue ; and then, considering the infirmities of our nature, it does but lead us to a severer Condemnation, and leaves us in a worse condition then it found us. If we, *knowing that all these things shall be dissolved, ought to be such manner of persons in all holy conversation,* and yet such manner of persons we cannot be, we had better have been without this knowledge still, and then an ordinary conversation might have serv'd our turn.

To which I answer, nevertheless, that the benefit of our Religion is very great, and the hazard is not so great as we may imagine. For tho' *all holy conversation and godliness* be our rule, yet that the strictness of our duty may not damp our hopes, and make us leave off our work in despair of bringing it to perfection, we must know that God is merciful as well as just, and if we are not altogether *such manner of persons as we ought to be,* yet if we use our best endeavours, he will accept us as we are, and our Saviour's goodness will supply the rest.

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He has compassion for our Infirmities, and pardon for our Sins, and that the prospect of Judgment might not affright us, he aton'd for our Offences by his Precious Death, before he gave us the proof of our Resurrection; and if we do but come with Faith and Repentance to his holy Altar, and there lay claim to the merits of his Death, no doubt but it will be effectual to us; if we do but serve the Law of God zealously with our minds, *There is then no more condemnation*, says St. Paul, *to them that are in Christ Jesus, tho with their flesh they do serve the law of Sin.*

But to this it may be reply'd again, that if the Gospel gives such hopes to a sinner, and leaves such a latitude unto sin, it takes off the edge of Judgment, and leaves the world in as wicked a condition as it was before; And then what need we care *what manner of persons we ought to be*, or what kind of conversation we follow, while we live, when a Death-bed Repentance may set all right at last, and at the day of our dissolution, our very sins also shall be dissolv'd.

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In answer to which, we must observe, that the Gospel does give hopes of pardon to a Penitent Sinner; but it gives no encouragement to a Presumptuous Sinner, to hope that he ever shall Repent; and therefore whosoever transgresses the Law, upon this vain confidence in the Gospel, has no reason to expect either Pardon or Salvation; what, *Shall we therefore commit Sin*, says St. Paul, *that grace may abound*, God forbid; and 'tis no less blasphemous to say, that the Grace of the Gospel was therefore given, that sin might abound.

God has promised his mercy to us, not to abett us in our Vices, but only to encourage our repentance: But he that makes this proposal of repentance to be an encouragement of his Vice, perverts the intention of God, and endeavours to put a fallacy upon the Gospel; but yet the deceit will fall heaviest upon himself.

The sum of all which is this, that if we cannot come up to that accomplishment in Christianity which we ought, yet we must labour to be as accomplish'd as we can: And then, tho' our endeavours

vours are weak, yet God will accept of a willing mind, and when the great day of the Lord shall come, he will only account with us for that Talent which we have receiv'd, and exact no other improvement from us than what he has put within our own power to bring about.

But if we call him a *hard Master*, as the sloathful Servant did, and think him difficult to be pleas'd, and therefore hide his Talent under ground until he come again, then we shall find him hard indeed, but 'tis we ourselves that made him so.

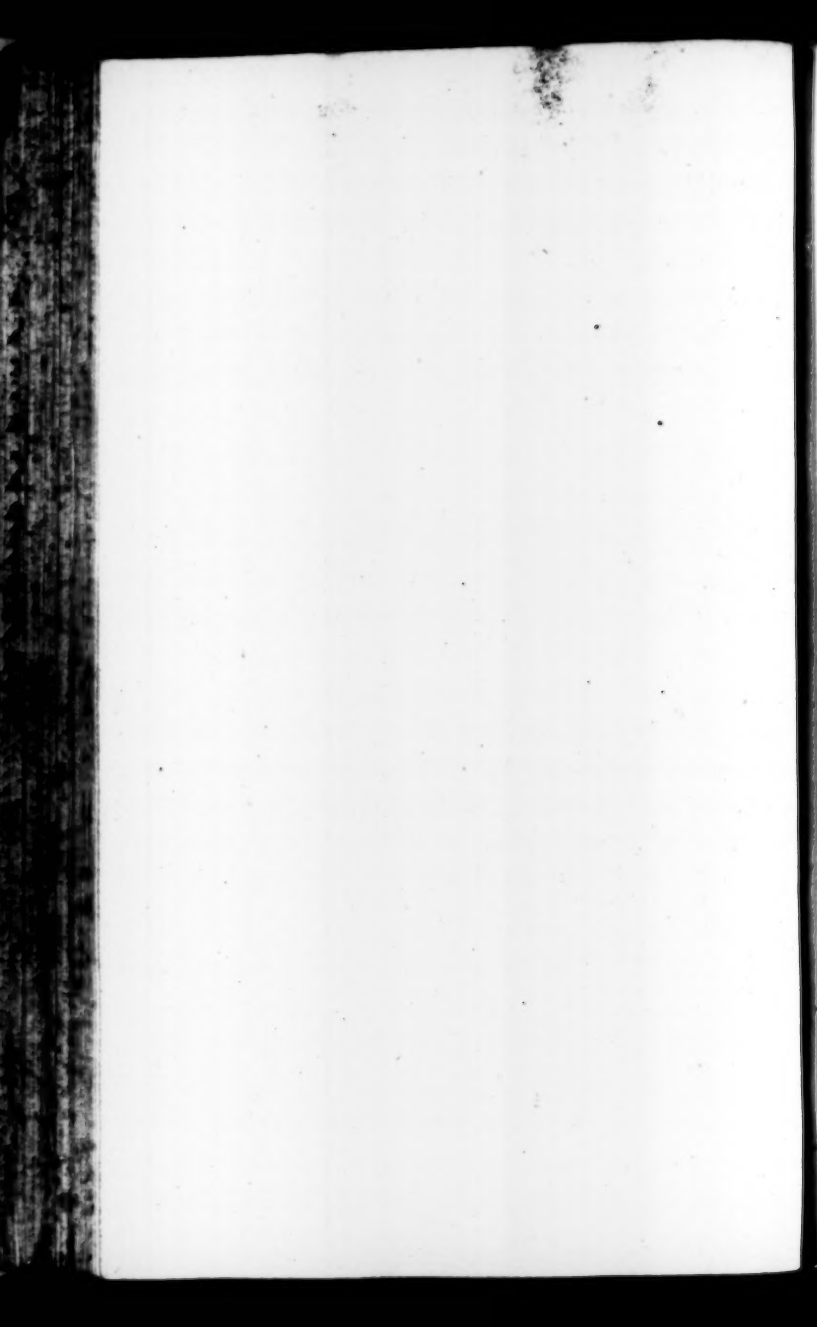
Or if we think him so easie a Master, that any slight service, or any weak excuse will serve his turn, and therefore we negligently misemploy, or mispend his Talent, we shall find that it was we only who were too easie of belief, and shall pay dearly for our error.

These are the two dangerous extreams, the two fatal rocks, of Presumption and Despair, between which every good Christian steers his Course : He seriously considers *what manner of person he ought*

to be, and then labours what he can to be so; and having done his best endeavours, he trusts God for his reward; neither despairing of his Mercy, nor presuming upon his own Deserts: But with an humble resignation, and a Religious Hope, he looks for the Great Day of God, that when *all these things shall be dissolv'd*, he may receive a better portion in those things which shall never fail.

Which God of his great mercy grant us all thro Jesus Christ, &c.

P E T.



2 P E T. III. 11, 12.

Seeing then that all these things shall
be dissolv'd, what manner of persons
ought we to be in all holy conver-
sation and godliness, looking for
and hasting unto the coming of the
day of God.

THese Words are a compen-
dious, but perfect Abstract
of the Gospel, and present
us with an entire body of
Christian Divinity.

1. They shew us the great motive
to our duty, the Resurrection of the
dead, *When all these things shall be dis-
solved.*

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2. They

2. They tell us what this duty is; that we ought therefore to employ our selves *in all holy conversation and godliness.*

3. They discover to us in what manner, and to what degree we must discharge this Duty, *viz.* As persons *that look for and hasten unto the coming of the day of God.*

The 1st. of these I have explain'd at large in my last discourse, and so I proceed to the

2d. Thing propos'd, *viz.* to give an account what this Duty is, as it is set down by the Apostle in my Text, consisting of two parts. 1. Holiness. 2. Godliness. The 1st. of which has a respect to our Conversation, the 2d. to our worship. Of both which I shall endeavour to give a plain practical account, as they stand by themselves; and to shew the necessary dependance which they have upon one another.

And 1. The 1st. branch of our duty is a holy conversation, which Words may appear perhaps something hard to be under-

understood, and something harder to be put in practice ; and at first sight may seem so contrary to our nature, as to carry a contradiction in the very terms.

For Holiness is a Sequestering our selves from the World, and Conversation is engaging our selves in the World again. Holiness withdraws and exalts our Soul to Heaven; and Conversation draws it back again to the Earth. A thing is then call'd Holy when 'tis abstracted and separated from all common uses ; and yet Conversation mixes us with the common heard, and involves us in the ordinary usages of the World. And this rude notion of the Words, this first and false apprehension of the thing, has occasion'd great mistakes in two sorts of men.

1. There are some, who out of a mistaken zeal for Religion, separate themselves from Conversation, for the sake of Holiness, and

2. There are others, who through a mistaken sense of pleasures, renounce all Holiness, for the sake of Conversation.

tion. And therefore in answer to the

1. Of these I shall prove, that without Conversation there is no Holiness, and therefore 'tis to no purpose for them to be retir'd. And to the

2. That without Holiness there is no Conversation, and therefore 'tis to as little purpose for them to be extravagant.

And the clearing of these two Propositions will suffice to shew us what is the true nature of this Duty in my Text, and how these terms may be reconcil'd. And

1. There are many, who to guard their Vertue, as they think, and to secure their holiness, retire from the World, and bid defiance to conversation, devote themselves to a melancholy solitude, or at most, to a select Society, and keep a distance from the rest of mankind, for fear they should be infected ; as if there was no way to preserve themselves from suffering, or from doing evil, but by entering into such a course of Life, where they are not capable of doing any good. Against this unprofitable State, there are
very

very many, and very weighty things to be objected, both from principles of nature and Religion. As,

I. That 'tis an unnatural institution, and running counter to those principles which God himself has put into us. He made Man a sociable Creature, and in all respects fitted us for conversation. He gave us infirmities, that should stand in need of Society, and mutual help ; and gave us suitable inclinations also, to help each other.

And to make Society more safe and easie to us, he has endow'd us with faculties fit and proper for this use ; a wonderful Talent of Language, to communicate unto one another the secret resentments of our Soul ; and an open countenance, like Windows into our heart, thro' which our passions and inclinations may be plainly read ; that like the Angels themselves, we might converse by intuition, and see into one another's thoughts ; and by the great blessing of God, tho' our Words should be deceitful, yet our thoughts can hardly be conceal'd.

With these Appetites, these Faculties, and these Wants, God sent us into the World, to cherish and support each other, and to enter into a mutual League and Association, and since God sent us hither with this intent, why should we banish our selves from the World again, and bury our Talents and our selves alive.

Why should we, in the obstinacy and perverseness of our hearts, withdraw from this universal League, and stand separate from the common Interests of mankind?

Indeed, if our Religion commanded us so to do, then nature must give way, and 'tis but just that, to comply with God, we should deny our selves. But,

2. We shall find that conversation is not only a Natural, but a Religious duty, and the most proper means to secure our Vertue. Indeed our holiness cannot subsist without it, but will degenerate into sowerness of temper, or supercilious affectation.

Our nature cannot bear a perpetual uninterrupted attention upon the same objects, tho' they are never so lofty and Divine; but we must allow our selves some release, and not think to make our selves all spirit before our time.

And therefore God has made Conversation to be a necessary ingredient of Christian Vertue, as well as of Humane Life; to relieve our spirits like sleep, and to renew our strength like Wine, and so to encourage and enable us to the performances of Religion.

And accordingly we may observe, that the Communion of Saints, which is one of the fundamental Pillars of the Christian Church, is a principle of practice, as well as faith.

'Tis this that quickens our endeavours, and raises a holy emulation amongst us; it sets the example of good Men before our eyes, endears their persons, and recommends their practices to us; and Vertue never spreads, or flourishes so well, as upon the ground of Love and Friendship.

K 4

And

And therefore our blessed Saviour, who came down from Heaven to shew us an example of an universal goodness, a perfect life, convers'd freely in the World, and made himself a common Friend, and descended even to Publicans and Sinners.

Why then should one sinful man despise another, and affect a reserv'd, absteriour course of Life; or what Christianity can there be in doing so, when Christ himself became a Companion for all mankind.

Once indeed he was carried into the Wilderness, but it was to be tempted; why then should we go voluntarily thither of our selves, in hopes to avoid temptation; or how can we think to secure our holiness, by flying from the World, when in doing so we expose our selves to the Devil.

By our retirement we may possibly escape those Vices, of Intemperance, Injustice, and the lusts of the Flesh, which are indeed too commonly seen in common conversation; but on the other hand, we are in danger of falling into other Vices that

that are as unreasonable at least, and more pernicious than they ; such as Envy, and Pride, and Malice, a supercilious admiring of our selves, and despising all the World besides.

These are the natural product of a reserved, morose constitution ; and tho unprofitable Tares are the proper growth of the common field, yet these venomous weeds will always be growing in the Wilderhess.

By our retirement we have this advantage, that we can abstain from some gross actual Sins, and 'tis for our ease to do so. But will we call this a Vertue, when there is no temptation unto Vice. Is it so mighty a commendation for a Man to be sober when he is alone, when he has neither appetite to provoke him, nor company to entice him to excess ? He only is the vertuous man, who is proof against these tryals, preserves his temper amidst all these temptations, and keeps himself unspotted by that wicked World which he daily converses in.

And

And therefore he that renounces the World, and retires from the conversation of Men, in order to preserve his Holiness, gives it but a very indifferent commendation : shews that his retirement is not the effect of his Faith, but his diffidence : he dares not venture his Vertue abroad, dares not depend upon his Religion, but like a Covetous distrustful miser locks all his Treasures up, and so in effect he loses them indeed, for fear they should be lost.

Nay it too often happens worse than this, that the distance which he keeps is not the effect of his diffidence, but his affectation, and is not designed to secure his Vertue, but only to set it off. Like the Pharisees he cries, *Touch me not, for fear I should be defiled : Stand off from me, for I am holier than thou :* and yet he would not have us stand too far off neither, for fear his holiness should not be seen.

These are the objections against a retir'd, separate, unsociable state of Life : 'tis a violation of the laws of Nature, and the Ordinances of God ; 'tis a downright contradiction to the example of our Saviour,

Saviour, and the necessities of our Soul : Sometimes 'tis the cause of Pride, and sometimes the effect ; and instead of being a test and security of our Vertue, it commonly proves both an indication and a means of Vice.

But there is one objection against it more, and greater than all the rest, and that is, that it brings a prejudice upon Christianity, teaches Men to look upon Religion as an intolerable burden, and upon their duty as an unreasonable restraint : makes them think that Vertue consists only in grave absurd formalities, in morose unnatural reserves ; and that Piety and Pleasure, are inconsistent things. And when Men once come to believe that there must be no conversation where there is any holiness, how naturally do they quit all pretence to holiness, for the sake of conversation. And this is

The 2d mistake which I told you of, in answer to which I shall shew, that these two things are so far from being inconsistent, that there can be no true conversation where there is not piety and holiness joyn'd with it.

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It was wisely observ'd, and honourably spoken of a Heathen, that whosoever would build up a lasting Friendship with any Man, must lay his foundation in Virtue. There is nothing in the World besides, substantial enough to bear the weight, or steddily enough to sustain the confidence, which familiarity and friendship requires between Man and Man.

There is something of levity in every sinner, which makes him unfit to be depended on: Nay there is something of treachery lies at the bottom of every sin. 'Tis falseness to our God, and betraying of that trust which he reposes in us. 'Tis a plain degeneracy and baseness in Nature; but in Religion 'tis down-right perjury besides, and the breach of a most solemn Baptismal Vow.

When Men have all these brands of infamy upon them, what assurance can they give of their fidelity; and where there is no assurance, what pleasure can there be in Conversation.

Society in such a case is nothing but a Snare, a state of Jealousies, distrusts, and fears; and whereas a true Israelite is without Guile, sincere in his friendship, and ready to receive all Men with an open heart, and open arms, these wild wicked *Ismaelites*, have their hands against every Man, and every Mans hands against them.

He that is not carry'd into conversation by principles of Vertue, may be called perhaps a good Companion, but can never make a good Friend; nay he is not to be look'd upon as a Companion, but a Spy: For as soon as his interest requires it, to serve his own covetousness, or Lusts, he will not fail to betray our Conversation.

At best he is but a brother in iniquity, a companion in vice, the entertainment only of some senseless unthinking hours; and who would value such an endearment, as lasts no longer than a Frenzy, and must vanish as soon as the Man comes to himself again: Such Accomplices as these may make a rout, but can never make a Society.

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In a word, Society can never be pleasant, but when it is secure ; and it can never be secure, but when 'tis vertuous too ; when principles of Honour and good Nature & Religion combine together, to and make up a perfect Harmony amongst Men, and unite their hearts in a laudable, agreeable, that is in a Holy Conversation.

'Tis then that Vertue shews all its Strength, and sets off all its Beauty, and gives us an opportunity to enjoy the World to its best advantage : Then we may freely taste the Honey, without fearing of the Sting : And walk confidently, without danger of the Snare : For after all the caution that we can use, we shall find that Vertue is our best security, and Innocence our only Guard : and 'tis very strange that Men should think *Conversation, and Holiness*, are inconsistent things, when God has constituted our Holiness on purpose for the sake of Conversation, and enjoy'd us such a Vertue, as is fit and proper for all the uses and services of humane life.

For this reason, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery, thou shalt not Steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet,* because these things are pernicious to Society, and destructive of our lawful commendable pleasures : And if there is any other Commandment : It is briefly comprehended in this, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And what greater happiness can we wish upon Earth, what better fence for Society can we desire.

And this may suffice to prove, that Holy Conversation is a practicable thing, and what the nature of this duty is. But before I quit the point in hand, having consider'd the nature of our duty, give me leave to say something also of its extent, which is express'd in my Text by *all Holy Conversation.*

Whereby we are to understand, that it is not the practice of some single Vertues, not the observance of some particular commands, but an universal righteousness, an impartial obedience to the whole Law, that must make us Holy.

And

For

And yet there are those, who mightily value themselves for abstaining from some one Vice or other, and such a Vice perhaps to which they have no inclination, and then think that, for the sake of this abstinence, they may have the liberty to indulge themselves in their more beloved Sins.

But if Vertue signifi'd no more than this, it would be hard to find out a vicious Man: Impossible indeed to find out a Man, that should have either the leisure, or the appetite, or the strength, to pursue all Vices in the World, and prove himself an universal Sinner.

Alas we need not take such pains to gain the reputation of being Wicked; any one sin may do the work effectually, any one broken limb makes a Cripple, but he that is sound must be sound throughout.

Therefore we must have an equal regard to all the commands of God, and beware of Vice in both extreams. If we are proof against Covetousness, and Oppression

pression, yet why should we run from thence into Luxury and Excess.

If we have overcome these Lusts of the flesh, yet why should we indulge an envious, malicious Spirit, and so forfeit the honour and reward of our own Vertue, by our uncharitable censuring the vices of other Men.

In short, there is no one Moral Duty with which our Religion can dispense, but of all Duties, none is so indispensable as Humility : If we offend the Law *in one point, we are guilty of all*, and if we keep it all, yet still we are *unprofitable Servants*.

This is a very useful Doctrine, I am sure ; tho I fear it is not very usually considered by us : And the Use which we should make of it is this, to be more severe in judging of our selves, and more modest in censuring of other Men. Did we but consider more, *what manner of persons we ought to be*, and less, *what manner of persons others are*, it would be much better for us, and never the worse for them. Could we but forbear this over-valuing, and magnifying our own pretended Holiness, we should be;

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not only more friendly, but more holy in our Conversation. And so much for the first Branch of a Christians Duty. I proceed now to the

2. Which is *Godliness*, or a pious affection of mind towards God, and a zeal for his Service, such a kindly warmth, and heavenly flame within us, as naturally breaks out into a Holy Worship, and Religious Devotion.

'Tis the flight of our Soul towards Heaven, the breathing of our Spirits to that place from whence they came, and to which they would fain return: 'Tis such a rapture of Piety and Pleasure, so purely a spiritual Joy, that it must be felt before it can be understood, and even then 'tis easier to be apprehended than described.

And therefore *Godliness* is a Duty, not like that of *Holy Conversation*, to be defin'd by certain Rules, and inculcated into us by demonstrative instructions, but it must grow insensibly upon us, as an Inspiration of God, that works by secret Instincts, and inward Impulses upon our Spirits; and all the good words
and

and perswasions in the world, can no more make a Man Godly, than they can make him wise.

For these high qualities we must be beholden to some Higher Powers ; and all the advances which of our selves we can make towards the attaining of them, is only by some former preparations of mind, and a regular course of Discipline; for this reason the Apostle, in my Text, very properly makes *Godliness* to be introduc'd by a *Holy Conversation*. And accordingly I am to shew in the next place, the necessary connexion that there is between them, and the mutual dependence which they have upon one another : Indeed *Holiness* and *Godliness* must go hand in hand , and one of them is never to be seen without the other. For,

1. 'Tis nothing but a *Holy Conversation* that makes way for *Godliness* :
And

2. 'Tis nothing but *Godliness* that confirms and supports a *Holy Conversation*.

L 2

1. 'Tis

1. 'Tis the exercise of a Holy Life that makes way for Godliness, and ushers in our Devotion: Or to use a more proper expressive Metaphor, 'tis Holyness that prepares the fewel, and lays it close together upon the Altar, and then the Spirit of God descends upon it, and kindles it into a godly flame, and so compleats the Sacrifice.

Where our lives are vertuous, and our actions agreeable to the Will of God, there is nothing to hinder our Devotion. But to expect that Godliness should grow upon us of it self, or be inspir'd into us without the previous works of a Holy Conversation, is as preposterous a thing, as to look for a fire to be kindled out of a few green scattered sticks.

If therefore we find our Devotion cold when we come to the House of God, we may know what the occasion of it is, and must take care to correct that fault at home. We must *wash our hands in innocency, and so we must go unto the Altar*; So we may hope that our Sacrifice shall be accepted: But to go thither with polluted hands, and an un sanctified heart

heart, is profaning of the service without profiting of our selves.

What inclination can we have to appear before an offended God ; or what pleasure is it to look up to Heaven, whither our guilty Conscience forebodes we are never like to come. 'Tis our Faith, and Hope, that must encourage our Godliness, and give wings to our Devotion: But what Faith can we have without Repentance, what Hopes without Amendment ? All the pretences that we make to Piety in such a case, are but Artifice and Disguise, to impose upon other Men, and all that we get by it is only to cheat our selves.

But 2. As there can be no Godliness without Holy conversation, so a Holy Conversation cannot be maintain'd without Godliness : 'Tis this that must establish our Hearts, and strengthen us in our Resolutions ; and our nature being so frail and inconstant of it self, cannot support our Vertue without the assistance of God, and the supernatural influences of Religion.

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There are indeed some bold forward Men, who love to presume upon their own strength, and like *St. Peter*, with more confidence than faith, dare venture into the deep, till they find themselves sinking with their own weight, and then they are forced to cry out for help unto their Saviour. So dangerous a thing is it for us to think that we can go alone.

We may talk of a moral Vertue, and it is indeed a thing only to be talk'd of, for as yet it was never seen. We may trust to the conduct of a natural Religion, but we shall find such deprivations, in our Soul, as nature alone can never cure.

Nothing but the hand of God can set us right, and nothing but our Religious worship can prevail upon him to lend us his helping hand : Therefore with Pious Affections and Zealous Prayers, we must present our selves before him ; and in a true sense and apprehension of his perfections, we must acknowledge our own unworthiness; with bended knees, and a broken heart, we must beseech him

to take pity on the works of his own hands, and once more to restore us to that perfection in which he made us, and from which we by our transgressions fell.

These are the workings of a godly zeal, thus we must prostrate our selves at the Throne of Grace, and make out in Humility what we want in Worth, and then, as our holy Conversation promoted our Godliness, so our Godliness will supply the defects of our Conversation.

But for Men to be professors of Godliness, and then think themselves above the Rules of conversation ; to be devout towards God, and injurious towards Men ; to be godly, and proud upon it, according to the fashion of our times, is a dangerous absurdity in practice, and a plain contradiction in Terms. *I dwell, says God, with him that is of an humble Spirit.*

'Tis true, it is not easie for us to know, when our devotion is so exalted, as to deserve the name of Godliness, nor when our Conversation is so pure, as to be called Holy ; and perhaps, as it is not easie, so it is not necessary to be known ; that

a modest distrust of our selves might keep us humble and industrious, and always pressing forwards towards more perfection.

But tho' we cannot discover when we Are, yet we may know when we are not so holy and godly as we ought to be; and for this the Apostle has given us two very useful Rules and Characters, in the last part of my Text; where, in answer to his own question, *What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation?* He tells us,

1. We must be such persons as *look for*, And

2. Such as *hasten to the coming of the day of God.*

The 1st. of these has respect chiefly to our *Conversation*, and the 2d. to our *Godliness*. *Looking for* implies our attention: and *hasting unto* requires our zeal. And,

1. In all our conversation we must behave our selves with great attention to our duty, as persons that *look for the coming of the day of God*. We must have a constant regard to that great day of retribution, and so order all our works, that they may be able to pass the account, and stand the fiery tryal.

The word *διασπορά* which is translated *Conversation* in my Text, properly signifies the various turnings and transactions of our life; in all which we are here advis'd to be so circumspect, that which way soever we turn our selves in this life, we may be sure to have an eye upon the life to come. We must make that the scope of all our works, the main drift of all our undertakings, and look upon every step that we make upon earth, to be so far right as it advances us in our way to Heaven.

Every wise man proposes to himself some principal end, to which he directs all his Actions, and makes every motion of his life subordinate to that great Design, and every good Man makes that great design to be the honour of God, and the
Salva-

Salvation of his Soul ; here he fixes his hopes, hither he bends all his endeavours, and accounts every day mispent, which does not advance his Interest against that great *day of God*.

Therefore before we engage our selves in any course of life, let us seriously consider which way it leads, and how it stands affected towards those great ends of Christianity : not how it may serve to comply with some little, present, underling designs : but how it promotes, or debases our interest in the other World.

It may perhaps dazle our eyes with a gawdy shew of Riches, and Honours, or stop our Mouths with flattering promises of pleasure and delight. If these Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures, would accompany us to the other World, we had some reason indeed to think them good, and to embrace the offer. But, alas ! *all these things must be dissolv'd* ; and since they must be so, we ought to judge of their goodness by other measures ; not by their present appearances, and first sight, which always is deceitful ; but by second, and wiser thoughts, and weighing the consequences which they are likely to produce.

We

We see oftentimes how an eager pursuit after the pleasures of the flesh, turns that flesh into a putrid Carcass, even while it is alive; how a mighty load of Riches weighs a Man down into the grave before his time; and a vain Ambition of soaring after Honours, and Preferments, may carry a Man so high as to break his neck in the fall.

If these were the worst effects of sensual Pleasures, yet even these are enough to discourage a prudent Man, and force him to make a wiser choice. But there are worse effects than these, *a worm that never dies, and a fire that never goes out*, are dismal things to consider, but more dismal to endure.

We may put off the consideration of them now; and in the enjoyments of the flesh, we may banish such melancholy irksome thoughts, but as we lessen our fears, we increase our dangers; and if we will not *look for the coming of the day of God*, it will come upon us unexpected, and what is worse, it will find us unprepar'd.

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Therefore it behoves us very much, to compare our lives and conversations with the Rule which God has set before us in my Text, to bring all our actions to the Standard, and see whether they are likely to be proof at the day of Judgment; to have the *law of God* always in our heart, and the *day of God* always before our eyes; and by these infallible measures to regulate our lives, and correct all our sinful wandering excursions.

But if we let our passions loose, and our actions run on at all adventures, and never give our selves the trouble to bring them to account, then to be sure we do not act like persons that *look for the coming of the day of God*, and consequently we are not *such manner of persons as we ought to be*.

If we do *look for the coming of the day of God*, and yet upon the review of our lives, we find our actions such as will not stand the test, then we must of necessity unravel all that we have done amiss, go back so many paces as we have gone astray, and begin from thence forward a new Progress in Vertue, setting

ting our faces directly towards Heaven.

If this review is a tedious work, we have but one way to prevent it, and that is, to take more care of our ways at first, and provide for *the coming of the day of God* in better time.

Lastly, the other test which the Apostle puts upon us; to shew *what manner of persons we ought to be*, is that we must not only look for, but *hasten unto the coming of the day of God*. It is not enough to stand gazing up to Heaven, and fearfully expecting when that day shall come upon us, but we must be earnest and eager in our expectations, and so fit our selves for that day of God, that we may be ready to pray that *his Kingdom may quickly come*, that he would *shortly accomplish the number of the elect*, and bring us to a joyfull Resurrection.

This is the true and proper test of our devotion, which is never perfect till it is so perfected in Love, as to exclude all fear, and enable us to think upon that great day of God with comfort. When our Godliness has brought us up to this degree

degree of Faith, then only are we *such manner of persons as we ought to be.*

And nothing but *Godliness* can bring us to it. All that a *Holy Conversation* can do for us, is but to make ready our accounts, and *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*, but 'tis godliness alone that gives us hopes, and takes off the terror of that day, and makes us not only *look for* but *wish for the coming of the day of God.* Our Conversation is but trimming of our Lamps, but 'tis in our Devotion that we go out to meet our Saviour.

And from hence we may learn, how zealous, and fervent our Devotion ought to be, and whether it does indeed come up to the heights of our Religion. If we are with difficulty brought to the House of God, and find our attendance uneasy there, if we are cold in our performances, or at best but lukewarm in our affections, then does our Godliness fall short of the Standard in my Text, and cannot be call'd *hasting unto the day of God.*

If we can't endure to keep our minds intent upon the service, but are glad of any object that diverts our thoughts, and takes them off from our Devotion. Surely this is not *hasting unto*, but flying from *the day of God*, and how can we think that these awkward services, these untoward Sacrifices, should ever be accepted.

Then only do we give a real testimony of our zeal, then only do we pay God an acceptable service, when we *come into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Joy*, when we are vigorous in our desires, and chearful in our Devotion, and by the importunity of our Faith press forward towards the prize of our high calling, and *hasten unto the coming of the day of God*.

Such manner of persons we ought to be, and God grant that we may be such, that when the day of God shall come, we may enter into the fulness of that joy in Heaven, which we began in our holy conversation and godliness upon earth.

ECCLES.

ECCLES. XI. 9.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,
and let thy heart cheer thee in
the days of thy youth, and walk in
the ways of thy heart, and in the
sight of thine eyes : But know
that for all these things God will
bring thee into judgment.

IN this Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon
calls himself the Preacher, and thinks
it no disparagement to his Royal
Dignity, to descend from Govern-
ing to Instruct his People. God had bles-
sed him with the greatest Wisdom, and
the circumstances of his Reign had given
him the greatest Experience in the World,
and after he had observ'd and try'd all
the several courses of Humane Life, in
this Book he sums up all his Observati-
ons;

ons, for the Honour of God, and the advantage of all succeeding Ages.

Here he has shewed us the true Bounds of Wisdom and Folly, what is Profitable, and what is Hurtful to the Sons of Men; the powerful inclinations which we have to Vice, and the more powerful motives to bring us unto Vertue. Here the Ways of God are faithfully related, the Nature of Man is perfectly describ'd, and above all, the necessary connexion between Folly and Repentance, between Sin and Judgment, is exactly shewn.

For after Wisdom has done its best, and convinc'd us of the folly and falsity of our ways, yet there is nothing but this Doctrine of terrours that can persuade us, nothing but punishment can effectually restrain our Lusts, and it is not the *vanity* of Sin, but the *vexation of Spirit* that must reclaim us.

All this is declar'd throughout the whole series of this excellent Book, but more particularly in the words of my Text, which are indeed principally directed to the young Man, but yet they comprehend the whole compass of our Life,

Life, and may serve for Instruction to every Age: They shew us how naturally our youth begins in folly, and how necessarily those follies of our youth lead us to Repentance in our riper years. But if we let that season slip, and will still run on in the *ways of our own heart, and the sight of our own eyes*, then my Text shews us how unavoidably such a continued course of sin brings us to Judgment at our latter end.

Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes. Thus far my Text speaks joyful comfortable things, and had the Preacher stopt here, or spoke in earnest, no doubt but every young Man would become his Profelyte.

But the following words are of a quite different stamp, and speak another language: They check the young Man in his Career, and discourage him in the height of his Enjoyment: Shew him the Precipice to which his head-strong courses lead him, and bid him retract his vain imaginations before it is too late. *But*

know that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.

'Tis our duty therefore to weigh well both parts of my Text, and chuse that which we find of greatest moment : Whether we will walk according to *the ways of our heart, and the sight of our eyes*, or according to the evidences of Reason and Religion, the certain knowledge of a future *Judgment*.

Solomon has plac'd them in my Text one against the other, and fairly laid them both before us ; and that we might not complain of unequal representations, as if he had dealt partially in favour of Religion, we find here the pleasures and delights of youth set off to the best advantage, and so heighten'd with all their commendations, as if the Preacher himself had inclin'd to the young Man's side. Only at last he cuts them all off with one peremptory word, *But know* : And weighs them all down with only the name of *Judgment*. *But know that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment*. In my following Discourse therefore I shall consider.

1. The natural inclinations of Youth, and how strongly they lead us unto Vanity.

2. The curb that is put upon us by Religion, and how much more reasonable it is that we should comply with the apprehensions of a future Judgment. And

1. The Inclinations of Youth, and the Vanity of those Inclinations, cannot be more lively, or more elegantly express'd, than we find them in the former part of my Text; wherein *Solomon* artificially exposes the humour of that Age, and by the very manner of his expression, shews how it indulges its own fancy, lets fly at all diversions that come within its reach, and affects nothing more than a boundless uninterrupted flow of Pleasures.

He knew the natural Heat and Inconsiderateness of those giddy years, how want of experience renders them incapable of advice, and impatient of all contradiction or restraint; how want of weight makes them launch out into the deep, with more Sail than Ballast, and value themselves only upon

their speed ; how they disdain the thoughts of being cautious, for fear of being accounted slow, and take a pride in leaving all Prudence and Consideration behind their backs.

All this the Preacher knew, and therefore he treats the young Man in his kind : Does not attempt to stop him in his Course, nor make him more eager still, by crossing the Current of his Pleasures ; but he gives him his hearts desire, allows him the full scope and swing of his Lusts, and lets him run to the utmost of his Line. Do, follow thy own Inclinations, and see what will be the Success. *Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes.*

Here we have a goodly prospect, which at first sight, and at a distance, makes a glorious shew : And yet if we view it nearer, and examine the several branches of it apart, we shall find it made up of horrid Precipices, dangerous rocks, and fatal ruines, such frightful Passages, as will rather discourage a wise man's attempts, than invite his curiosity.

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As, 1. *Rejoice, O young man* : And what is joy it self, but Folly and want of Consideration ? 'Tis giving up our selves to a heedless, Intemperate course of Life, and then setting our own Reason aside, for fear it should reprove our Vanity. 'Tis such a loose habit of mind, as not only endangers the health of our Souls, but is unbecoming, and disagreeable to our Nature.

Through pangs we came into this World, and with our Tears we first saluted the Light : And from that time, to the very Agonies in which we must depart, there is nothing in this Life that can warrant a wise Man's Joy, or deserve his Admiration.

The Providence of God has dispens'd unto every Man his Portion in this world, with a mixture of Good and Evil ; and every provident Man is contented with that allay, and takes it as it comes. But should we separate the bitter from the sweet, and make our portion all luscious now, what shall we do when we come down to the Dregs, when all the bitterness settles at the bottom, and God himself puts *trembling into our Cup* besides.

It was greatly observed of a Wise Hea-then, That *True Joy is a serious thing*: And a wiser than he has said of *Laughter, that it is Madness, and of Mirth what does it?* It does but effeminate our Souls, and delude us with false appearances of Happiness; brings us into a shady pleasing Vale, and there caresses us for a while, till we find that it is but *the vally of the shadow of Death*, there is a Snake lies lurking in the Grass, the brood of the Old Serpent still haunts the bewitching Tree.

Thus our pleasure leads us into a Fools Paradise, and there leaves us, to lament our folly, when our Paradise is lost: It seduces us out of the manly rugged paths of Vertue and Honour, into a smooth and even way, and then draws a mist before our eyes, that we may not see the Precipice to which it leads us. It gives a loose to our Passions, and takes us off our guard, and banishes that wisdom which is our best defence. *Rejoice O young man*, but know, that whilst thou layest thy bosom open, thou dost but invite the tempter in, and instead of filling thy heart with Joy, thou emptiest it of all thy Vertue. Again,

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Rejoice O young man in thy youth :
 And what is there in youth that should occasion such rejoicing? 'Tis a time of weakness, and inexperience, and for the most part our youth is so ill managed, as to prove a reproach unto our Age: And is this a matter of so much Joy? Is this a proper season for us to rejoice, when we are sowing the seeds of a long Repentance? Is this a time to give the Reins to our Fancy, and trust our Vertue without a Guard, when our Reason is Weak and our Passions Strong? From whence proceeds this confidence of our selves, or what can we find in our Youth that creates all this assurance in us?

Is want of Understanding such a happiness, is want of Experience such a Commendation; how powerful a thing is Ignorance, in so perverse a thing as Man? Sometimes 'tis the Mother of our Devotion, and at other times it can make us Profane: Sometimes 'tis the occasion of our Fears, and here again 'tis all the nourishment of our Joy. So faithful a saying is that of Solomon's, *He that increases knowledge, increases sorrow*, and as a Man's discretion grows upon him, his childish Pleasures wear away. Yet

Yet still youth is a time of Strength and Vigour, our Spirits then are Active and our Humour Gay, and therefore the Young Man looks upon Pleasure as his Portion, and rejoices in his lot, and so he resolves to go on.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth: That is, Improve all opportunities of Joy, and encourage thy self in Pleasure, and let not the apprehensions of any Evil come nigh unto thy Soul: This is the springtime of thy year, when all things are fresh and fragrant, and Nature it self is in its Prime, and therefore 'tis fit that we also should comply with the chearfulness of the Season, and enjoy the blessings that are before us. 'Tis well advis'd indeed!

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Youth, like the Spring, in a time of hopes: But 'tis only the hopes of a joyfull harvest; then is the proper time for joy, and 'tis nothing but the prospect of Man's Estate that can authorize a young Man's Pleasure: Youth is but a common passage into the world, and according as our station in the world is like to prove, such should our passage be; it may lead us in-
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to a Prison, as well as to a Paradise, Why then is all this expectation before we know the result? Why should we make our misfortunes, when they come upon us, prove more uneasy by means of this disappointment, and flatter ourselves with the hopes of a glorious harvest, which perhaps we are never like to reap.

Youth is a time of growing Strength and Vigour: But alas, how short is that time, and how uncertain is that Strength: How liable is Youth to be supplanted by a Disease, and how certain to be swallow'd up by impotent Age, or untimely Death. Even whilst we reflect upon it we grow Old, and our strength, by the very using of it, wears away.

Rejoyce, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; But know that those days are few, and whilst thou rejoicest in them, thy youth not only flies away, but the extravagance of thy joy makes thee grow old before thy time.

All this the young Man, ignorant as he is, cannot chuse but know. But yet prudence is a contradiction to his years, and

and fore-cast is the thing he hates, and tho his understanding (young as it is) could inform him better, yet still he persists to follow these counterfeit directions in my Text, to *walk in the ways of his heart*, whatever happens, and will not depart from *the sight of his eyes*, for all the blind morals in the world : And therefore, as his fancy leads him, and his passions drive, so he runs desperately on, and resolves to allow himself the full scope of his present inclinations, without any regard to the things to come : And 'tis notably resolv'd !

But, is a young Man's heart so wise, as to be trusted without a guide, when Age its self, with all its temper and experience, stands in need of good advice ? 'Tis a dangerous thing for the wisest Man to *lean unto his own understanding* ; upon what confidence then does this young Man presume, that he alone should *walk in the ways of his heart, and the sight of his eyes*, and yet how short-sighted are his Eyes, and how deceitful is his Heart ? That he should set up all his Sails, and steer himself by his own wild imaginations, without considering how many fatal Rocks and Quick sands lie in his way, too deep

deep for him to discover, and yet too high for him to escape.

And yet tell him of his danger, and he does but despise the information : He looks no further than the Surface, and where the face of the Sea is smooth, he apprehends no dangers that are out of sight : Therefore he still presses forwards in his Course, disdains all Rules, and breaks all Bounds, and desires no better authority for what he does, than the warrant of *his own eyes*, and the approbation of *his own heart*.

Thus he comes forth, full of his Youth, and rejoices like a Giant to run his course, and resolves to pursue his Pleasures, tho it be to the destruction of both his Pleasure and Himself : His foolish inconsiderate heart is like Stubble, 'tis quickly in a flame, and yet he is never well but when he is playing with the fire : And if he can but get some present satisfaction from the warmth, he lets it burn on, without considering, that the fire which heats him consumes him too, and the ways of *his heart* lead him directly down to the *Chambers of Death*.

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These are the follies and dangers of Youth: And if the rashness, and ignorance of that age, is no excuse for such a foolish course of Life, how much more inexcusable are they, who continue the same practice in their riper years, and carry their youthful vices with them to the Grave. How disagreeable a thing is a Grey Head and a Childish Heart: When experience and years have weigh'd our Reason, and ripen'd our Understanding, and given us a Judgment of Discretion, what a shame is it to deliver up our selves to the guidance of our Passions, and the government of our Lusts, and forgetting the Gravity of our Age, to be carried away like Children, by every toyish Sport, and every trifling Pleasure?

How absurd a sight is it to see a Man's Soul and Body so unequally yoked; that his vice should out-run his strength, and under the decays of a feeble age, he should affect nothing but vigorous youthful recreations. When we have had so long experience of their vanity, who could think that we should not yet be convinc'd; when we have enjoy'd so many opportunities of exercising and improving

ving our Vertue, what a reproach is it to our Nature, that we have made no progress all this while, in the only business of importance that we have to do ?

How can we see our own nakedness, and not be asham'd ? how can we hear the Voice of God, and not be afraid ? 'Tis he that upbraids our folly in my Text, 'tis he that denounces Judgment against us, and tho the sentence is transmitted to us through the Preachers hands, yet the voice is the Voice of God. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes. But know, that for all these things God will bring thee in to judgment.* Which was the

2. Thing propos'd, namely the Curb that is put upon us by Religion, and the great reason that we should comply with the apprehensions of a future Judgment. We see to what a prodigious degree of folly and extravagance we might be carried, by the heats of youth, did not the expectation of that great account cool us into some serious thoughts. But this consideration is enough to confound our Lusts,

Lusts, and baffle our Enjoyments, and when we see the Sword hanging over us, we shall have but little relish for the dainties that are before us. This is the great power of God, whereby he overrules the intemperance of Man, and corrects our folly by shewing us our danger.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, &c. But know, but how should a *young man know*, when his eyes are so dazled with vanities, and his heart so prepossessed with Pleasure, and his spirits so full of joy, that he has no room for such melancholy considerations: And as for these *Judgments of God, they are so far out of his sight*, that he is at a loss whether there be such a thing or not.

The Preacher indeed tells him so, but for this, he has only the Preacher's word. Nay, but 'tis the Word of God that tells him so, and he himself at last will find it so, and then he will wish that he had believed the Preacher sooner: Then what comfort will he receive from all the rejoycings of his youth, what will it profit him to have *walkt in the ways of his heart, and the sight of his eyes*, when that inde-

indecent liberty, which he unseasonably us'd, shall end in an odious confinement, and he shall reap in Tears what he sow'd in Joy. Then all the former delicacies of his life will serve only to make his death the more intolerable; and the short liv'd pleasures of his youth will but increase the sense of his never dying pains.

How dismal will be the remembrance of his sin, when he shall consider, that it was only the *walking after these ways of his heart*, that has brought him into this place of Torment; only trusting to the *light of his eyes*, that has lost him those Pleasures for evermore, *which eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceiv'd*.

And can he think that all the entertainments of his youth were worth it? If he was put to his choice again, would he upon second thoughts submit to the exchange, and once more give up his Soul for nought? Why then does he not take warning before it is too late; now, whilst his Soul is in his own keeping, why does he not secure his Happiness, before that dreadful day comes, when his negligence

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ligence may be repented of, but can never be retriev'd? Since he knows that there remains a fatal account, why does he not take care to come prepared: Since he knows that *for all these things God will bring him into judgment*, why does he not study to pacifie his Judge, and fit himself for mercy.

When the irreversibile Decree is once pass'd upon him, then what would he not give to reverse the Sentence; what lusts of the Flesh, what Pleasure of the Body, what Sin of the Soul, would he not give up, to redeem himself; and how will he wish that the *ways of his heart* had been corrected long ago, tho it had been by losing *the sight of his eyes*, and plucking out those false deceitful glasses that betray'd him.

'Tis a melancholy thing to reflect on those Pleasures which shall be no more, and to think that I have been happy: But 'tis much more miserable to think that I might have been so for ever. I *knew the terrors of the Lord*, and would not be *perswaded*, I was often admonish'd of my danger, but would not be convinc'd

vinc'd ; and now I am justly punish'd
for my unbelief, now I am perswaded
with a Vengeance.

Nay, 'tis such reflections as these that
aggravate our punishment, and increase
the torments of Hell it self ; this is a
Worm in our Conscience *that never dies*,
this is such a heart-burning within us
as never goes out : 'Tis a folly for which
we can never excuse our selves, and the
remembrance of those ways which were
the vicious entertainments of our youth,
will prove our torment to all Eternity.

All these are dismal considerations : A
wounded Spirit is the most exquisite pain,
the Wrath of God in Judgment is what
no mortal Man can bear ; 'tis such a
burden, as the young Man, with all his
Spirit cannot cast off, and the old in-
veterate hardy Sinner is not proof a-
gainst it.

But still how shall the *young man* know
that this is true : We have indeed the
word God to vouch it ; but it is that God
whose Power the Sinner has defid, and
then *what Credence will he give unto his
word* ? Yes, we have the voice of Nature

too, to second these truths of our Religion ; we have the Universal cry of all Mankind : And does not He know yet that there is another life ? What then is the meaning of those presages of his own heart, that active moving Principle within him, which gives him a boundless desire to live, and shews him some confus'd prospect of "a vast time to come : What is this, but some glances of his Immortality, some dawnings of an Eternal Day.

And does not he *know that God will then bring him unto judgment* ? from whence then proceed those startling apprehensions and remorses in his Soul, which all his obstinacy cannot stifle, and all his intemperance cannot remove ? 'Tis certainly the Voice of God within him, the foreboardings of Hell, and the prelude to a future Judgment.

Tho he has now fortified himself in sin, and entrench'd his Soul within his Pleasures, tho he thinks them secret as the Darkness, and quiet as the Grave, yet the eye of God will break in upon him : Both his eye, and his hand can reach us, when we are most retir'd ; and tho Fig-
leaves

leaves may hide our shame from the sight of Men, yet all the Trees in *Eden* cannot shelter us from the presence of God.

Even our own obstinacy and sin, stupid as it is, can give us neither diversion nor relief: But tho we have *hardened our hearts like the nether millstone*, yet God makes them soft again, and prepares them for the impressions of his Wrath, puts Fears and Terrours into our Soul, and then gives the deadly blow.

All this the sinner knows, tho he will not confess: It is not Death alone, but something after Death, of which he stands in awe: It is not the fear of being reduc'd to nothing that disturbs his Pleasures; for, for such a state as this, he desires to compound with God, and would gladly give up his Soul for lost, so his body might not be tormented in this flame, nay, such a death as this is the utmost of his Ambition, 'tis what he has us'd himself to all his life, a stupid unprofitable state, wherein his Soul has been buried all this while, and has only some perverse motions, some senseless works, to, prove that he is alive.

But for all *these things* God will bring him into judgment, and God knows to what a fatal sum all these things may amount, or what may be the fatal consequence. When all our evil deeds shall be expos'd in the sight of that God, whose eyes are to quick too over-see, and *too pure to behold iniquity*, the lest we can expect is, that he should remove us and our sins together, that loathsome Object, from his presence ; and to be banish'd from his presence is a *punishment greater than we can bear.*

And now the sinner *may walk in the ways of his heart*, and if it seems good in his eyes, he may trample upon Vertue, and Religion too : Run down all reason that opposes his Lusts, and look upon this World as made for his Diversion, and the other for his Scorn : Yet still there is a secret resentment in his mind, that will revenge the quarrel of Religion, a sad misgiving in his heart, which tells him there is a dreadful account to come, and whispers in his Ears, that *for all these things God will bring him into judgment.*

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Consider this, and then *rejoice*, O *young man*, if thou dar'st, and let *thy heart cheer thee*, if it can; for to what purpose shouldst thou trust to *the sight of thine eyes*, when thou know'st that God will shortly *bring thee* to a stricter, and severer *Judgment*: Why shouldst thou follow *the ways of thine heart*, when this very heart of thine, which flatters, and betrays thee now, at last will accuse thee, Condemn thee, and Torment thee too,

Seeing therefore the Judgment which we apprehend is so very dreadful, and our sins give us so much reason to be apprehensive of it, what remains but that we make timely provision for our security, and immediately begin a wiser course of life. Surely we will no longer dally with our destruction, we will no longer trifle with God's Judgments, nor live under this dismal suspense, but we will offer up unto God our darling Vices, *Now, while we have some pleasure in them*, and present him with that sin of our Soul, whatever it is, that lies nearest to our heart; that the costliness of the present may be an

undeniable argument of our Love, and effectually recommend us to his Favour.

So lively, so early a Sacrifice, will be sure to be accepted : But when the decays of Age shall come upon us, and our Pleasures shall abandon *us*, when we must be Vertuous by force, and no thanks to us for it neither, then how shall we wish that we had given up our youthful Joys before, when we might have had Heaven for them in exchange.

Therefore let us check the intemperance of our Lusts, before they run us upon such a Rock, from which we can never disengage our selves : Let us abate our immoderate desire of airy pleasure, and poise our Souls with more Manly serious reflections. Consider that we are the off-spring of Heaven, of a Divine Extraction, and therefore above the petty diversions of the Flesh : That God sent us into this World to Govern and Subdue it, and accordingly has put a graceful Majesty and Gravity into our Souls, that so we might bring all his Creatures under our Command.

Why

Why then should we suffer them to take advantage of our weakness, and perpetually make slaves of *us*: Why should we tamely see our selves led Captive by that World which is below us, to be drawn to and fro by Cords of Vanity, and made the sport of every tempting Creature.

Let others rove about for such fantastical recreations, who have no solid joys to dwell upon: But let Us correct the extravagance of our ways, and make his Law to be our only Rule, at whose Judgment Seat we must appear, and by whose Sentence we must stand or fall.

Let us live as *in the sight of his eyes, and walk in the ways of his heart*, so may we sincerely *rejoice in our youth, and our heart may cheer us*, in our riper years, and when old age shall come upon us, we may long for that time when *God shall bring us into judgment*, and then receive our doom with Comfort..

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ECCLES. XII. 1.

Remember now thy Crea'or, in the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

THE figure which King Solomon made in the World, was very remarkable, upon every account; there was nothing mean or indifferent in all his Character, but his Virtues and Vices both were extraordinary, and except it was our Father *Adam*, no Man ever rose so high, or had so great a fall.

In Wisdom he never had his equal, and no Man was superior to him in Power, till he presum'd upon the strength of these endowments, to try the taste of forbid-

forbidden fruits, and to prove his heart with Youthful Pleasures, and so came at last to forget his Creator, to whom he ow'd all those excellencies which he presum'd upon.

He thought that his Power might allow him to indulge his Appetite, and that his Wisdom could correct that indulgent humour when he pleas'd : But the Poison was too strong for the Antidote ; and when his Soul had once taken the infection of Vice, 'twas more than all his Reason, and the poor remains of his Vertue could do to work the Cure.

How long he continued in these extravagancies, is uncertain ; but thro' the Grace of God, working upon his decay'd Estate, his declining Age, he did return to himself at last, and gave warning to the World to avoid those desperate courses which he had run.

And that this warning might take effect, he chang'd his stile from the King to the Preacher, and this Book of *Ecclesi.* is his solemn Recantation. Here he recounts all the Follies of his youth, and the

the excursions of his riper Years, his fond pursuits after Pleasure, and Mirth, and Women, and Wine, and all things which gain intemperate, inconsiderate Men are apt to set their hearts upon; and at the foot of the account, he Sums them all up in a Cypher, *Vanity of Vanities*, says the Preacher, *All is Vanity*.

In this 12th. Chapter he draws to a conclusion of his Discourse, and remembering what presumption it was that seduced him at first, where it was that he lost his way, he leaves this Mark, this kind *Memento* for those that come after him: *Remember Now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

In the verse immediately following the context, we read, That the Preacher sought to find out acceptable words; words that should pierce as the goads, and stick like nails fastened in the assembly by a Masterly hand. And certainly the words of my Text are such, very apt and proper to strike our Affections, and to fix themselves in our Memory, and if they are but properly apply'd, they are enough to correct all
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the looseness and irregularity of our minds. And therefore I shall endeavour in my following Discourse, to give such a plain interpretation of these words, as may lead us all to a practical application of their sense.

1. I shall explain the Duty here enjoined, *Remember thy Creator.*

2. I shall insist upon the circumstances of time which my Text prescribes, and shew the necessity of performing this Duty, *Now, in the days of our youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.*

1. Then, there is a very large comprehensive duty contain'd in these few expressive words, *Remember thy Creator.* *Creator*, which is the Object of this Duty, is a word of great significancy, and mighty weight, and represents God unto our thoughts, as the sole Author of our Health, and Strength, and Life, and Being, and all things that are beneficial, or delightful to the Sons of Men: It sets off the Divinity in the greatest lustre that our mortal eyes can bear, and displays

plays the Atchievements of God in perfect Glory : Both his Mercy, and Power, and indeed all his Holy Attributes lie couch'd under this one pregnant expression, the *Creator*.

But yet, *thy Creator* is a term of more particular endearment to us, and lays an affectionate Emphasis upon the Word, applying all those Attributes to our advantage, and appropriating all those Blessings to our selves.

And therefore, *Remember thy Creator*, which is an act of ours, and constitutes our Duty, must bear a due proportion to its Object, and extend as far as our *created* faculties can reach : It requires that we should *set this God*, this Creator, *always before our eyes*, and have a due regard to him in all our actions, and so takes in the whole compass of our Religion. For as to *believe* in God, comprehends the practice of all those vertues which are the reasonable consequence of such belief ; so to *remember* God is to perform all those Duties, and Respects, which the remembrance of him naturally produces. And they are three

I. That

1. That we pay him that Love and Obedience, which is due to his Mercy.

2. That Fear and Reverence, which we owe to his Power. And,

3. That Religious Worship and Devotion, which belongs to all his Holy Attributes.

And, 1. the Remembrance of our Creator obliges us to pay him that Love and Obedience, which is the natural Tribute belonging to his Mercy. Whatsoever we enjoy upon Earth is the bountiful gift of his Goodness, the product of his Creation, and therefore our very enjoyments should admonish us of our Duty. *Does Job serve God for nought, and hast thou not made a hedge about him,* was an invidious insinuation of the Devil, but he had reason for it.

Nay, not only all that we enjoy, but whatsoever we see in this World, should put us in mind of him that made it, and every Creature in our view gives us a lively Image of our Creator. *Præsentem ostendit qualibet herba Deum,* said the Hea-

Heathen Poet. That is, as the Apostle expresses it in better terms, *the invisible things of him, even his eternal Power and God-head, are clearly seen in the Creation of the world; being understood by the things which he has made.*

The whole world is nothing else but a Register, a Catalogue of his Noble Acts : In the Volume of this Book it is written, that infinite is his Mercy, and wonderful his Works; and wherever we open it, we may read in Beautiful Characters, the Name of God.

And together with the name of God, they bear also the Seal of Man, and the marks of our propriety: With what admirable order and convenience has he dress'd up this World for our entertainment, and made every Creature there serve for our Nourishment, Ornament, or defence. How has he put *the fear of us*, and *the dread of us*, into their hearts, and made them Subject and Obedient unto Man, even as he intended Man to be obedient to himself.

Should they renouncethe Law of Their
Creation, as we do Ours, should they
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withdraw their Obedience, and rise in Rebellion against Us, their Lords, as we daily rebel against the Lord our God, how soon should we be reduc'd to nothing? Naked and hungry we should return to the Earth again, and in the miserable conflicts of Poverty, and Death, we should curse the bitter effects of our own ingratitude.

Surely if we do not forget our selves, we cannot chuse but *remember our Creator*, and acknowledge that he has a just title to our Obedience. Who is so deserving to command, as he that created Man; who so fit to give Laws to our Affections, as he that sees all the secret turnings, and windings of our Hearts.

He only knows the just bounds and measures of our Passions, how far to raise and improve them into a Virtue, and where to check them lest they exceed into a Vice: And by the same Almighty Power that *still the raging of the Sea*, he subdues this *madness of the people*, and says, *thus far shalt thou go, and here shall thy proud waves be staid.*

When our Creator undertook to make
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this World out of nothing, he did but speak the Word, and the thing was done: When all the Elements of this World were nothing, but confusion, he only gave the word of comand, and they all came into this admirable order which we see: And one would think, that the same word should still have the same effect, that when he says unto us, *Be still*, all our confused thoughts should discipline themselves, and our riotous passions give way.

A very learned judicious Heathen, observing this passage in the 1. of *Gen. and God said let there be light, and there was light*, breaks out into a high commendation of the words, and says, it was spoke like a God. How strange is it, that this Heathen should be so ravisht with the expression, and we Christians so little affected with the thing.

The truth is, our Creator form'd and fashion'd our Bodies out of the Earth, a soft complying Element; but we have made our selves hearts of Stone, otherwise, like the yeilding Clay, we should receive all the impressions of his hand with a ready compliance, and with all

submission we should *remember our Creator*, and confess, that as it is our Happiness to be created, so 'tis our Honour to be commanded by him.

2. When we *remember our Creator*, we must needs acknowledge that there is a fear and reverence due unto his Power: There is so much Majesty in that stile, that the very name of *Creator* should strike an awful dread into our hearts, and create a reverence within us, and make us *fall down and kneel before him*, as David says, *when we remember the Lord our Maker*.

Unto him no submission can be so low, but that to pay it, is an honour to the greatest Prince: If we humble our selves to the very dust, it is but from whence he rais'd us up: And if he has exalted us to a higher station, and laid Honour upon us, why should we therefore deny him the honour due unto his name; why should we fight against our Maker with those weapons which he himself has put into our hands?

If he has given us Beauty, and Strength, the Vigour of Youth, and opportunities of Pleasure, why should we possess our pleasures to the prejudice of his Service

Service, and in the enjoyment of our good things, forget that God who created both them, and us.

We may entertain our Souls with Mirth, and fortifie them with Riches, and so banish God out of all our thoughts: We may disobey him, if we please, and forget him, if we can; but we should consider the while, that 'tis dangerous provoking his Wrath, for his Power is Mighty to Destroy, as well as Mighty to Create.

Both the Heavens, and Earth, and all things therein, are the Works of his Hands; and all, but Man, are at his absolute disposal; if We will not obey his Voice, all other Creatures will, and at His command They will punish our disobedience; strip us of all their borrow'd feathers, with which we pride our selves, and send us forth into the wide World, as naked as we were born.

Tho God has given our Soul a liberty to dispose of its self, yet still our Body is in his hands; he that made it out of the dust, and by the word of his Mouth spoke life

into that unactive lumpish Element, can by the same word take away our Breath, and then we crumble into our original dust again. And shall we not stand in aw of that Power? tho we were altogether earthly minded, yet this respect we owe to our earthly part, to study its preservation, to fear that God, who can with ease destroy that Body, which he so easily made.

3. From this sense of his Mercy, and Power, there arises a third duty upon us, when we *remember our Creator*, namely that we should pay him a Religious Observance, a Holy Worship, which is the natural result of his Power and Mercy, the genuine composition of our Love and Fear: And what can we do less, considering that we are his Creatures, than to fall down and Worship him, for our Creation, Preservation, and all the benefits of this Life: And this Worship is what we properly, and peculiarly call the Service of God: And what all Nations in the World have always acknowledged to be his due, in return for those Mercies which he bestows upon us.

Even

Even the Babylonish Idolaters could say, *That the Lions of Samaria infested their Land, because they neglected the worship of the Gods of the place*: And a very Hea-then has observ'd, that no Nation was ever so barbarous, as to live without Religion, or so foolish as to think they had any title to the goods of the Earth, without paying their Devotion to the Gods in Heaven.

Nay, their fault was commonly in the excess of Zeal, which made Them, and some degenerated Christians after them, fall into Idolatry, and Superstition, and pay a Divine Worship unto those things which bore any suppos'd resemblance to their Gods, or had any relation to Religion.

An errour indeed it was, and an absurd one too; but not so absurd as that irreverent behaviour, that careless disrespect, which is too scandalously visible in the ordinary worship of our times; as if we could not express our dislike of Idolatry, but by running to the other extreme of Profaneness, and shewing our selves negligent in the true Religion, be-

cause they were over zealous in a false one,

Blessed be God, our Reformation has deliver'd us from the absurdities, which were mix'd with the Worship of God in former Ages; but let us not cast off the substance also, and life of our Religion, and *live as if there was no God in the World*; for this is not reforming of our selves, but our Creator, as if we would reduce him to a composition, and bring him to more familiar terms,

But what are we, that we should presume to retrench the Services of God? Who are we, that we should impose upon the Almighty, and live as if we had no dependance on him: *Is he not our Father, where then is his Honour; is he not our Master, where then is our Fear? It is he that made us and not we our selves*: Therefore says the Psalmist, *let us come into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.*

Thus we see, that an obedient, devout, Religious Life, is what Solomon advises us to in these words, *Remember thy Creator*; And I doubt not but the advice seems so reasonable to us, that we all resolve to lead

lead such a Life in time. But, it being a matter of very weighty importance, a very serious concern, our hot giddy minds are apt to adjourn the consideration of it from time to time, till old Age has cool'd us into calmer thoughts, or some kind affliction has brought us to a more steady temper ; and in the mean while, instead of taking *Solomon's* advice, we rather chuse to follow his example, in hopes that His example may plead Our excuse : and therefore to remove this pretence, I proceed,

2. To consider the circumstances of time, when this duty is to be perform'd; and they are four,

1. Remember thy Creator *Now*, in this very instant, and do not put off so necessary a duty, upon the uncertainty of another day, when there is no day, but the present, that we can call our own. The time past is fled and gone for ever, and leaves nothing behind it, but either the comfort of having discharg'd our duty, or the sad remembrance of our neglects: The time to come its self is nothing, the fond imagination, and forelorn hope, of the Sluggard, and the spend-thrift; only the

the present is at our disposal, and if we do not *remember our Creator Now*, it is to be feared we never shall: The time past is already dead, the time to come is yet unborn, but the present is our Life, *the living, the living, they shall praise thee O God.*

If a Religious Life be ever a duty incumbent on us, it is so now, at this very moment; with what confidence then can we defer our duty to day, and say, we will begin to Morrow. What strange presumption would it be in a Servant, who has his dayly task allotted him, to spend this year in Idleness and Folly, and promise to be good the next: Or what encouragement has his Master to bear with his delays, who when that time is come, for the same reason will be apt to make the same excuse.

The very first Grounds and Principles of our Religion teach us, that we must Worship God, and serve him truly, all the days of our life: and truly we serve him very ill, if we defer our duty from day to day, and think that one days industry may make amends for the idleness of another. God knows, the service of every day requires our most Vigorous Endeavours, and

and all that the morrow can do, is but
to take care for the things of its self.

Therefore remember thy Creator *Now*,
and trifle not away the present time, but
make every day to be a pattern of thy
whole life, thy duty perform'd, and thy
accounts made up each night, and do
not lay a double charge upon the time
to come, which will hardly bear its own
expence. But,

2. It may be said, why should the
Preacher be so instant, why so importu-
nate in his demands? *Now*, is a pe-
remptory word, and perhaps an unrea-
sonable time; *Now*, perhaps is but the
entrance upon our Life, the prime of
our Youth, and gives us a hopeful pros-
pect of many flourishing years to come;
and what need we be call'd so early to
our duty, why must we endure all the
toile and heat of the day, when the eleventh
hour may be time enough, a little la-
bour in the cool of the Evening may
serve our turn.

No says my Text, Remember thy
Creator, *now in the days of thy Youth*, for
if thou neglectest this morning call, 'tis a
question

question whether God will call thee again in the evening, or whether thou shalt Then be better dispos'd than Now: Therefore obey the first summons, and do not think there is any toile in Vertue, till thou hast try'd it, and then think so if thou canst,

Know that the earlier thou appearest in thy duty, the kindlier it will be accepted, and the easier it will be perform'd: Therefore dedicate unto God the first Fruits of thy Life, and that will sanctifie thy time to come, and make all thy succeeding years holy and happy: Offer up to him devout Sacrifices in the spring of thy age, and he will bless thee with many and fruitful harvests.

This is the most proper time to frame, and model our minds, according to the original that God has set before us. Now our faculties are Fresh, and vigorous, our Will compliant, and our Understanding not prepossess'd; and at these tender years we shall receive impressions with ease, and by a little use may retain them to a great perfection: But if we give way to sin, and allow our vices time to grow, they will soon settle into deadly habits,

habits, and triumph over our Vertue, and a whole Body of Sin and Death will quickly get the dominion over us.

'Tis therefore for our ease, as well as our security, to apply our selves betimes to that work, which doubles upon us by delays, and gets advantage against us every moment. If we are so unfortunate as to lose our way, the farther we proceed, the more tedious will be our return; therefore let us correct our selves with speed, recall our errours, and reform our selves in time, *Return to the Lord your God, and turn from all your evil ways, for they lead to the chambers of death.*

If we find it troublesome to return, we have the more need to set speedily, and vigorously about it, seeing that our passions are already grown too powerful for our Vertue, and sin has strengthen'd its arm to our confusion, and the longer we neglect it, the stronger it will grow.

If we find our selves easie in our sins, and current in iniquity, we must know, that our Souls are then in the greatest danger, when we think them most secure:
For

For such is the subtlety of the Devil, and such is the folly of Man, that they who have the greatest need, have still the least desire to be reform'd: And then 'tis time to rouse our selves from that deadly sleep, and prepare for our defence, for sin is already in our quarters, and death stands at the door.

If we think it a laborious irksome thing to cast him out, think how much more intolerable it will be, to submit to his tyranny when we have let him in. Therefore let no labours, or pains, or dangers discourage us from this religious enterprize: Tho we loose a Hand or an Eye in the Service, yet the conquest makes a glorious amends for that inconsiderable loss; 'tis better to go halt and maim'd into the Kingdom of God, than to preserve our eyes only for the use of weeping and wailing, and to fall cleverly, and entire into the place of torment.

In a word, 'tis ill dancing upon the brinks of a bottomless Pit: 'Tis ill dallying with our destruction: and tho the Tempter smiles upon us now, and imposes upon our Youth by a false Copy of his Countenance, yet if we take the Serpent

pent into our bosom, we only shew him the way to strike us to the Heart. But,

3. Tho sin, when it has conceiv'd, does bring forth Death, yet Death commonly gives warning before he strikes, and that King of Terroures sends some of his fatal harbingers to prepare his way : Some diseases, or casualties, or natural decays, will surely admonish us of the approach of our latter end ; and then the sinner thinks it soon enough to *redeem his time*, when he finds that *the days are evil*.

Nay says my Text, but Remember thy Creator *before those evil days come*, for what commendation is it to grow Vertuous by force, to be frighted into our Duty, and never forsake our sins, till they have forsaken us : Till some imminent danger threatens us with suddain death, and so chills our Blood, and changes our Constitution, and makes us mistake that for Vertue, which is nothing else but Impotence.

What

What merit is it in a Rebel to lay down his Arms, when he can hold them up no longer? Therefore be sure to submit in time, that thou mayest come in upon advantageous Terms; *Remember thy Creator* before thou art driven to the last extremity; lest thy forgetfulness of God in the days of thy Youth and Vigour, should make thee forget thy self also at thy latter end; nay least a just judgment upon the unrighteousness of thy life, should strike thee with a sudden destruction, and give thee not time to pray, that thou mayst *die the death of the righteous.*

Since we have time before us, sufficient to work out our Salvation, why should we streighten our selves, to perform the important business of our whole life, in the last moment; when except we immediately, and effectually repent, we must surely perish: Why should we hazard our eternal Happiness upon the last push, the worst, and most uncertain part of our age, with this only hope, that probably we may then repent, and then probably God may forgive us. Alas two such probabilities as these hardly amount to a possibility.

For

For what grounds have we to hope that we shall then repent? nay there is something of a contradiction in the very supposal of it, that we should hope to be afflicted, and tormented, and confounded, and all this with the remembrance of those very things, which we practise now with such high delight, and mighty satisfaction.

Perhaps we think that our eyes will then be open'd, and when we see our nakedness, we shall be asham'd and mend. But how can this thing be; how could we take such deliberate pleasure in our vices now, if we knew they must bring us to such open shame at last?

Perhaps we imagine that we shall hate our sins hereafter, that we shall then feel the sting, and abominate the Serpent for it. It may be so, but surely if we thought so indeed, we could not hug him in our Bosom now, but should keep him at a greater distance, and look upon him as our mortal enemy. How is it possible for us to maintain such perfect friendship, and entire confidence with one whom

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we know we must shortly make war against, and prosecute to the very death? just so possible is it for a Man to take pleasure in his sin, and at the same time, hope that he shall repent.

And what if he should repent at last gasp, what hopes has he to be forgiven? 'Tis the *goodness of God that leads to a saving repentance*; but how can that Man expect the benefit of God's goodness, who has stood out so long in a spiteful defiance of his Power? How can he reasonably hope to be forgiven, who makes that hope to be the ground and encouragement of his provocations?

If thy brother offend thee, says our Saviour, and is truly sorry for it, thou shalt forgive him: But if he smites thee now, and says he hopes to be sorry for it hereafter, what is this but to offend in earnest, and repent in jest: Just so absurd, so preposterous a thing is it, for a Man to sin, in hopes that he may be forgiven; and to make that Religion, which was intended for the encouragement of a virtuous Life, to be the occasion of de-

ferring his repentance till he comes to die: and this doubtless is the reason why so many die impenitent. Therefore *Remember thy Creator now, before that evil day comes*, for then it may prove too late, and thou maist remember him only to thy sorrow.

But lastly, a sensual Man has yet one more pretence, that *there is a time for all things*, and therefore an old declining age is the most proper season for such a melancholy mortifying work. Indeed if we had nothing else to do but only to repent, a sick-bed, or a death-bed, might serve our turn; Nay, Hell it self would do well enough for that, and bring us most effectually to repentance: But it is not only our repentance, but our amendment that is requir'd; not only *a death unto sin, but a life unto righteousness*, and to this duty we must come with Vigour, and presence of Mind, and chearfully undertake the work. We must *remember our Creator*, says my Text, *before those years draw nigh, when a Man shall say I have no pleasure in them.*

We must make our Devotion to be the act, not of our necessity, but our choice : 'Tis our free-will-offering that God expects, and he expects it in the prime of our Flocks, the richest of our Treasures; but if we consume all these upon our Lusts, and assign him only the refuse of our years, we may go for our reward to those Gods, to whom we have pay'd our Sacrifice. *Go and cry unto the Gods whom ye have chosen in your prosperity, and let them deliver you out of your distress.*

'Tis a great mistake to think that pleasure is inconsistent with Religion, and that there is no difference between a sowre and a sober life : 'Tis a great disparagement of God, and a discouragement to all godly Men, to pretend that there is no Piety, but in a dark gloomy Soul, and a severe dejected Countenance. In our repentance we may mourn, and with good reason too; but in the acts of our Obedience, why so reserv'd and grave? In the exercises of our Devotion, *why so heavy, O my soul, why art thou so disquieted within me!*

Surely

Surely to live always as in a state of penance, is no very good symptom in any Man, no great sign of Religion: Surely 'tis no great commendation of his Piety, to be always repining, but never to repent.

The true Religion, without doubt, was design'd to improve our Nature, and compleat our Happiness, and to shew Man in his true Perfection: To fill us with sprightly, exalted Thoughts, and to entertain us with lively Notions, generous desires; that we should *serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.* 'Tis not so much the formality of the Tribute, as the willing Mind, and the chearful giver, that he respects: But what pleasure can he possibly have in those services of ours, which we our selves *have no pleasure in?*

If therefore we find our selves in Health and Strength, plentiful in our Fortunes, and vigorous in our Minds, let us not prostitute all those noble gifts of God to Prophane Ungodly uses, nor

think that they were given us only to *make provision for our flesh, and to fulfil our lusts.* For shame let us not follow after other lovers with that portion which we receiv'd from him, nor think that he gave us corn and wine and oyl for us to bestow on Baal, and when all our provision is spent, that then 'tis time enough to return unto God for more.

But when we enjoy our hearts desire, then let us account it the properest season to pay him our Devotion; when we are most fit for pleasure, then are we fittest for Religion; then is our Heart a Noble Sacrifice indeed, and worthy of our Creator, a Present fit to be made to the Great God of Heaven and Earth.

If it is unfortunately broken with age, and bruis'd with iniquity, yet even then 'tis the best that we have to give, and all that God requires, even a *bruised broken heart is a sacrifice which God will not despise.*

There-

Therefore whatsoever thy circumstances are, if thou lyeſt under any affliction, calamity, or decay, then take care to haſten thy repentance, and *redeem thy time becauſe the days are evil.* If no ſuch miſfortune has yet befallen thee, then *Remember thy Creator now, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay I have no pleaſure in them.*

I. C O R. XV. 33.

Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners.

THE Vices of *Corinth* had brought such a general corruption upon the Manners of the People, that they grew notorious for it even to a Proverb; and therefore to them this exhortation in my Text was undoubtedly very proper. But in so refin'd an Age, and Place as this, where Religion is so much countenanc'd, and Civility so much profess'd, it may seem an absurd thing to discourse of Manners, and a rude thing to suppose, that such exquisite *Manners* can be corrupted. And then, to suppose that this should be done by the means of *evil communication*,
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in an Age when Conversation is so very polished, and Communication accounted so very Good, is absurdity upon absurdity. Nay that we should be cheated out of our Vertue, and *deceiv'd* into this *corruption of manners*, at such a time, when the Wit of Man is grown so sharp, and his Reason so well improv'd, is such a supposition as the Men of the Times will very hardly grant.

These three prejudices, I easily foresee, will be rais'd against my following discourse: And yet the *Corinthians*, to whom St. Paul gives this caution in my Text, were undoubtedly a Nation as Wise, and as Polite as We; and upon inquiry I fear it will be found, that we are as corrupted as the *Corinthians*: At least the practice of our Age will make good these three Propositions, which are included in my Text,

1. That even *Good Manners* are liable to be *Corrupted*.

2. That this corruption is wrought in us by means of an *Evil Communication*.

3. That

3. That Evil Communication corrupts our Manners, by putting a deceit upon us; *Be not deceiv'd, evil communications corrupt good manners.*

These three Propositions I shall endeavour to prove in my following discourse, after I have shew'd, in the first place, what Good Manners are. This is a Word which every Man thinks he understands; and a Thing, which every Man professes: And yet of all things in the world, this is the most univerially neglected, and misunderstood.

Now by *Good Manners*, we commonly, and rightly mean, such decent Customs and Usages, such Laudable Habits and Deportments, as will stand the test of the most Critical Observation, and be least subject to give offence: And thus far the world is all agreed.

But then here lies the difference. Some think themselves no farther concern'd, than for the outward fashionable accomplishments of the world, the Habit and Deportment of their Body; and accordingly they make these arbitrary precarious

rious trifles, their only study and delight. This is what they call Good-breeding, and think that *Good-manners* oblige them no farther, than to observe the common forms of Speech, the usual methods of Ceremony and Address, to preserve themselves from being derided by those who are no wiser than themselves.

Whereas in truth, the seat of Manners is not in the Body, but the Mind of Man : This is the part that requires to be regulated, and brought in Frame ; 'tis this that stands most in need of being rectifi'd and inform'd ; and a misbehaviour here is the thing that is most likely to give offence. Here every false step is of dangerous consequence, every slip is not only offensive, but may prove destructive too ; and therefore we must guard our selves against it, not for fear of being derided, but undone.

To this end, we must take care to wear off all the awkward, untoward habits of our mind, and bring it to a tractable disposition ; our thoughts must be so polish'd, and our actions so refin'd, that they may bear the nicest observation of both God and Man, and may be fit to appear in the Court of Heaven. We

We must rectifie the perverseness of our Wills, and reclaim our corrupt affections, and never think our selves sufficiently accomplish'd in Vertue, till it has got an absolute ascendent over us, and subdued our very inclinations to Vice; till our flesh is grown obedient to the godly motions of the Spirit, and our Reason is not subject to be over-rul'd by our brutish Lusts, and Passions.

These are the *Good Manners* which my Text prescribes, and much labour it will cost us to make them *Good*: With constant exercise we must manage them, and watch them with continual care, and with great diligence we must keep them up-right and *unblamable*, in the midst of a *perverse and crooked generation*.

We must guard them with all the Powers of our Reason, and support them with the help of vigorous resolutions, and stop all the avenues through which Sin and Folly use to break in upon them: And if we find that this is more than our Reason, with all its resolution can do, then we must call in the Succours of Religion.

There

There we shall find the Grace of God, to strengthen our Wills ; and the Word of God, to enlighten our Understandings. There we shall meet with many Arguments to confirm our Vertue, and many motives to terrifie us from Vice ; Arguments too sublime for human reason to discover, and Motives too powerfull for even corrupted nature to resist.

There we shall see the Eye of God supervising our works, and the Judgment of God assigning our reward, and distributing to every Man, at the final Resurrection, *according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* These are considerations of so mighty a weight, so powerfull an influence upon us, that if we do but believe the word of God, we must needs obey it too, and the Christian Faith, if it is but sincere, will shew it self in Christian Works.

For this reason the Apostle, in my Text, applies the term of *Good Manners*, not only to the Practices, but to the Principles also of Religion, and calls it an unmannerly thing to deny the Resurrection; because 'tis denying of that important

tant fundamental Principle, upon which all our commendable Practices depend, the only Principle that is able to rectifie our Motions, and civilize our Lives, and keep us up to the rules of decency and honour.

From all which we may lay down this Proposition, as an undoubted truth, That Vertue is the only good breeding in the World, and to be Mannerly, is nothing else but to be Religious. And that this is true, I shall endeavour to prove, nay I think I may undertake to demonstrate.

And for proof of this, it must be consider'd, that *Good Manners* are nothing else but such a habit, and disposition of mind in Man, as keeps him from being guilty of an indecorum, or giving offence to those whom he converses with: Such an easie natural composure within himself, as makes all his outward motions graceful, and all his actions agreeable to others.

And from whence can all this, or indeed any of this proceed, but from Vertue and Religion? Indeed what is Religion.

ligion, but a Divine Rule, obliging us to live up to the dignity of Humane Nature: What is Vertue, but the result of this Rule, influencing our Lives, and Conversations, keeping us within the bounds of Decency, and guarding us from those absurd practices, which right reason abhors, and uncorrupted nature has an aversion to.

Nay the ancient Heathens, whose Philosophy was their Religion, and a Religion in which they made a glorious progress, define Vertue to be nothing else but living according to the precepts of Nature, and pursuing those works which are becoming to the Soul of Man, such as a good Man may practise without reluctancy, and a wise Man may behold without regret.

There is a gracefulness, a comeliness in every vertuous action, that strikes our Hearts, and wins our Affections, and we no sooner see it, but we Admire it too: Its figure is so very regular, and its features so very just, with such gravity, and modesty, and complacency does it appear before us, that there is no resisting of its Charms. But sin is a most disagreeable

agreeable unseemly thing, 'tis all extravagance, and intoxication; and every vice is something akin to Drunkenness, to practice it is Penance, and to see it is Antipathy.

By this very mark, by this Criterion it was, that the Heathens found it out: They saw plainly that it was a nauseating forbidding thing, and therefore unfit for humane use. Nay, for this very reason God forbid it too, that we might not run into those practices, which are reproachful in themselves, and distastful unto others, which dishonour Us, and disgust all those that are about us.

It were easie to demonstrate the truth of this, by instancing in the several particulars, and shewing the absurdity, the deformity, the foulness of their Nature: But the truth is, they are so foul, that they are as unfit to be heard, as to be seen: So offensive in the practice, that they cannot be related without offence: 'Tis a shame, says the Apostle, 'tis a breach of Good-manners, even to *speake of those things which are done of them in secret.*

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Then,

Then, it seems, even the vicious were so modest, that they would not suffer their Vices to be seen; and the Vertuous were so Chast, that they would not endure to have them rehears'd. But now the Scene is so unhappily chang'd, that Men not only openly Practise, but Proclaim their Vices too, and are asham'd of nothing but of being out of Countenance.

Even those who would be thought enemies to the practice, are yet friends to the representation, and can be content not only to see Vice set off to the best advantage, but to hear Religion vilifi'd, and Vertue ridicul'd: Now 'tis a great part of our entertainment in some places of great resort, to hear the Name of God blasphem'd, the Word of God expos'd, and the very Being of a God deny'd.

And is this all our concern for Christianity, is all our Christian patience and moderation come to this? *O tempora! O mores!* These are the times in which we live, these are the manners which we value our selves upon: Such times as all good Christians bewail, such Manners as
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all honest Heathens would be ashamed of.

And yet even this shall be call'd *Good manners*, and good Wit too, by the Men of the Times ; but where is the Wit of contradicting all the Wise, the Sober, and Judicious World ? Where is the Manners of decrying all the establish'd Notion, and affronting the Understanding of all Mankind ? Where is either the Manners, or the Wit of blaspheming our most Sacred Obligations, wounding us in our tenderest Interests, and arraigning our dearest Friends ? and what is so Sacred to a Man as his God ? What so dear as his Religion ? What so tender as his Soul ?

To make the least indecent reflection upon these, is the highest indignity that can be put upon us, and justifies the severest resentment ; and were it not that our Religion requires us to leave these resentments to the Law, should these Scoffers but meet with adversaries as lawless as themselves, they would quickly be chastiz'd into better Manners, and Atheism would be beaten out of the World.

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Indeed the whole profession should be exploded, not only as absurd and false, but as a rude offensive thing. and its professors ought to be treated like a common Nuisance, as they are ; they are the bane of Society, and the reproach of Government ; above all Law, and below all Reason and Religion.

They are, in short, the Enemies of God, and should be the scorn of Men: For wherever they are either countenanced, or allow'd, they will *corrupt* not only *Good manners*, but every thing that is Good besides ; and every Man that has any regard to his safety, or his honour, ought to look upon them with abhorrence, and say, *O my Soul, come not thou into their Council, unto their Assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.* But this is an odious ungrateful Subject, and so I leave it ; these are manners too bad to be reform'd, and therefore I proceed,

2. To prove, that even *Good manners* are liable to be *corrupted*. And this is a caution of which we all stand in need ; we are all too apt to have a good opinion of our selves, to think that our Religion is well establish'd in us, and
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our Vertue sufficiently secur'd, and this very opinion proves often times the occasion of our ruin. It lays our Souls too open, and takes us off our guard, and then the Enemy enters in ; it makes us venture our Vertue too far abroad, as if there was no fear, no danger of losing its way, and with this Presumption it sometimes runs out to such a length, that it never returns again.

There is nothing so catching as Vice, and nothing so subject to take infection as our Souls, and that Vertue which requires a whole Age to establish it, in one moment may be lost ; 'tis so frail a thing, that the first temptation may shock it, and the second may throw it down. Nay, 'tis so nice a thing, that an impure thought may sully it, and an immodest word may leave a reproachful stain upon it. Indeed it is so liable to be corrupted, that 'tis very hard, if not impossible, to preserve it from corruption.

Sometimes the Devil attempts us by secret Stratagems, and our Vertue is betray'd before we see our danger. Sometimes he attacks us by open force, and

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by the violence of a temptation bears down our Vertue and Religion too. Sometimes he comes to a Parly with us, and then he seldom fails to circumvent us in the Treaty, tho' he could not baffle us in the Field.

Our Faith and our Vertue, are the two noble endowments which he envies, the two strong holds against which he lays his Siege; and if he can but obtain the One, he never doubts the Other. The Creed and the Commandments, are the two Fortresses upon which the security of our Souls depends, and which soever of these is most unguarded, there he makes his attempt.

As, 1. If he finds us well grounded in the Principles of our Religion, and that he can make no impression upon our Faith, if we are proof against all the suggestions of Atheism, and Infidelity, and our Heads are too strong to be debauch'd, then he tries to find out some soft place in our Hearts, some tender Inclination that may more easily be wrought upon; some predominant Passion, or some darling Lust, is what every Man is Subject to; and when the Tempter has discovered

red our weak side, he fails not to ply it with the most subtle arguments, and sooth it with gentle insinuations, and at last overwhelms it with such a number of specious pretences, so many, that we have not the Power, and so plausible, that we have not the Heart to hold out against them.

And when he has won our Heart, 'tis an easie matter to get possession of our Head : When he has once master'd our Vertue, from thence he raises his Batteries against our Faith, and beats down all the Principles of our Religion ; 'tis a common observation, that a Man who is corrupted in his Morals, is never found in his Intellectuals ; his Vice possesses his Understanding, and stupifies his Soul, and he that confounds the Notions of Good and Evil, can never distinguish rightly between True and False.

And indeed there is good reason, as well as Experience for it. For he that has renounced all Goodness, has no excuse for doing so, but by denying of the Truth ; 'tis a natural thing for Men to fall from Disobedience to Rebellion, and when they have set aside all re-

spect for the Law, the next step is to reject the Government.

Thus it is in Temporals, and thus it is in Spiritual Affairs, if we cannot, or will not live up to the Rules of our Religion, 'tis our interest to wish that our Religion were False, that the Precepts of it were Arbitrary, and both its Promises and Threatnings, imaginary things; and what we wish, we are easily perswaded to believe: The tide of our affections bears down our Judgment, and wheresoever sin prevails, there reason will always give way to sense; till the infatuation grows so strong at last, that the poor deluded Man loses his Sense and Reason too. Like *Sampson* in *Dalilah's* Arms, first he loses his Virtue, and the loss of that betrays his strength; and when he is weaken'd, he is fit to be blinded too, and delivered up to the *Philistines*. This is one way, and the most usual way of turning Atheist. But,

2. If this fails, then the Enemy goes another way to work, and where he finds Men well settled in their Practices, he bends all his force against their Principles;

ciples; and so endeavours to Undermine that Vertue, which he could not Overcome. He knows that Faith is the foundation of Obedience, and if that be but supplanted, the other will fall of course: And therefore he labours to instill false Notions, and heathenish Principles into our Heads, and through that blind side, he easily diffuses his Poison into our Hearts.

There are some Men in the World too great to be tempted, and too wise to be impos'd upon; Men, who know, and allow the difference between Good and Evil, and scorn to submit to any vile unworthy Action; and if any bare-fac'd Vice should appear before them, they would reject it with indignation, and would be Vertuous, tho' it were only for *Good manners* sake.

Now all this is not Vertue, but Pride and Affectation; 'tis a good work, but only it stands upon a sandy bottom, and by consequence is like to stand but a little time. Such a Man presumes upon the goodness of his own Nature, and builds entirely upon himself, and that very presumption proves many times the
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occasion of his fall. It gives the Devil an opportunity to applaud his performances, and magnifie his Wisdom, and make him think himself secure ; and so by holding a flattering glass before our eyes, he cuts the very ground from under our feet ; teaches us to overlook the Principles of Religion, and despise an humble resigning Faith ; and when our Faith and Humility are gone, our Virtue is neither worth the keeping, nor likely to be kept. These are the methods by which *Good Manners* are frequently, and easily corrupted.

The 3^d. and next thing to be considered, is the Instruments which they are corrupted by. And here, for our caution, the Apostle gives us to understand, that this corruption is wrought in us, by means of an *Evil Communication*.

And this also is what we are unwilling to believe. Society, we know, was instituted by God, for the good of Men, and many excellent ends of Providence are answer'd by this Institution ; it serves to promote the honour of God, and to support the Interest of his Creatures ;

tures; to relieve us in our necessity, and comfort us in our distress; and is both the defence, and the ornament of our Nature: And since *communication*, upon so many accounts, is very good, we are loath, upon any account to think it *Evil*.

And yet there is not a greater Evil in the world than this. When conversation is corrupted, there is nothing so apt to corrupt our manners, and debauch our Souls. Here the Tempter sets upon us with artifice and address, Colloques us out of our Vertue, and Sooths us into our Destruction, and proves our most deadly enemy, under the disguise and habit of a friend.

Here it is that we learn to approve of those sins, which formerly we abhorr'd, and out of kindness to the Person, we come at last to be reconcil'd unto his Vice: Tho our soul be never so well fortifi'd, and our Vertue kept under never so strict a guard, yet there is no fence against an Enemy in our Quarters: That which we call *good company*, and my Text calls *Evil Communication*

cation, may easily betray that Vertue, which could not easily be storm'd.

Here familiarity does not beget Contempt, but Approbation: So prone are we to sin, that when we see it not only Practis'd, but Profess'd, and that with a plausible Air, and good assurance, the odium, and the terrour of it presently wears off, and our aversion vanishes by degrees, till at last we take it into our bosom, and then it stings us to the heart.

But this is not the only, nor the greatest damage, which we receive by *Evil Communication*. Tho our Practices are corrupted, yet as long as our Principles remain entire, our Faith in time may retrieve our Vertue, and bring us to our Senses and our selves again. But so *Evil* is the *Communication* of our times, that it endeavours to pervert our Faith, to sow the Seeds of Atheism, and instill the Principles of Infidelity into us. How many are there who make it their whole business and delight, to expose every thing that is Sacred, and vindicate every thing that is Profane; to consecrate Vice and Folly

Folly, and to bring God and Religion into Contempt?

These are now the great Ornaments of Conversation, these are the celebrated diversions of our age : And can any Man of ordinary Piety be diverted with such Scenes as these? can any Man of common sense be entertain'd with such filthy Communication? 'Tis a vexation to have eyes and see it ; Nay, 'tis a scandal even to have ears and hear it : And who-soever has a regard, either to God's honour or his own, will fly from such contagious Company, as he would do from an infected place : Their very words are pestilential, and it is not safe to breath in such an air.

We cannot but be sensible, how many unfortunate Men *have made ship-wreck both of their Faith, and Conscience*, upon this very ground : Yet still we scorn to learn wisdom at their expence, but steer the same courie our selves ; and tho we might easily foresee our chance, yet we resolve to run the venture.

Some

Some pleasure we find in Conversation, something that is agreeable to our nature, and we know not how to live without it: 'Tis true, and therefore where the Conversation is Good, *it is not good for Man to be alone*: But if nothing but *evil communication* will serve our turn, if nothing relishes with us but that which is apt to debauch our Virtue, and corrupt our Manners, how much better is it to live a Hermite; to make an innocent, and a safe retreat, and shew our selves to be above a wicked world?

For there is no diversion this world affords, can make us amends for the loss of our Religion: Nay, if we could *gain the whole world by losing of our soul*, we should quickly repent our bargain, and where is our Soul so likely to be lost, as in a crowd of idle unthinking company, a Farce of extravagant senseless mirth, where folly and vice are propagated in earnest, and all things that are serious and solemn are made a Jest.

Here

Here Profaneness appears with the face of Authority, and Heathenism is published with allowance, and where our Vices meet with such kind Protection, where the publick Countenance joyns with our private Inclination, there is no opposing both Wind and Tide, and our Souls must needs be carried down the stream. There we find the passage very easie, and think the Company very good, and that makes us go blindly and glibly on : and while we meet with such agreeable diversion by the way, we are unwilling to change our Companions, or shift our Course.

Thus we see, and indeed it is a deplorable thing to see, that *Good manners* are so liable to be *corrupted*, by the means of an *Evil communication*. And now, the

4th, And last thing to be proved is, That *Evil communication corrupts our manners, by putting a deceit upon us*. When our lives run smooth and easie, we are apt to conclude, that our way is right ; and if all is Pleasant, we think that all is Well. But 'tis a great, and a dangerous

rous mistake. God knows our business here is to encounter Difficulties, and struggle with Oppositions, and to make our way to Heaven, by a laborious Virtue : The Prize is too great for those that will not take Pains to win it, and nothing that is excellent was ever obtained with ease.

Were it not for the Opposition which our Lusts and Passions make against us, our Reason would be nothing else but Instinct, and our Virtue would lose both its Commendation and Reward. These are Inclinations which God has put into us on purpose to try our Courage, and exercise our strength upon : These are the slavish part of our nature, which may be very useful when they are well subdu'd. And yet because they minister to our Pleasures, we are such slaves our selves, as to give them the ascendant over us ; so foolish, as to think that our happiness consists, not in subduing, but indulging of our Lusts, and cherishing our Passions, and complying with all the Vicious Inclinations of our hearts.

Now

Now this is a Cheat, which all the sober part of mankind have always discover'd, and confess'd: and it seldom happens but the sinner himself at last confesses it too. Tho at present the gaiety of his Youth has prejudic'd him against Religion, and his ignorance, or unthoughtfulness, have so far prepossess'd him in favour of his vice, that he will hear nothing alledg'd against it; yet when Age has awaken'd his Reason, and laid his Sense a little more a sleep, then he will be sure to see his folly, when perhaps 'tis too late to reclaim his sin.

And why will we not see this in time; How is it that we scorn to be instructed, and hate to look before us, and suffer our selves to be led blindfold to a precipice? Tho Company and Conversation be never so delightful to us here, yet are we content to be ruin'd for Company, to go to the Grave for Company, nay, to a lower and dismallier place? Is there such consort in *weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*? These are some of the properties of Hell; and as we approve of these, so we may pra-

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ctice

Etice Blaspheming, and Cursing, and Reviling of God, which are the other.

Thus *Evil Communication* first cheats us of our Vertue; and then it teaches us to deny the Faith, which is another Cheat: When Men have abandon'd themselves to a profligate vicious course of Life, and made themselves obnoxious to the anger of God, and all the terrors of Religion, they have but one way left to pacifie their Conscience, and enjoy their sins, and that is, to perswade themselves that Religion is an Imposture, and *there is no God in the world.*

And to make this appear, the grand inquisition of Infidelity is presently set up, where the Faith is arraign'd, and the word of God is try'd, and happy is the Man that can find out a plausible objection: And for want of better, here Conjectures pass for Proof, and Possibilities are accounted Arguments, and to raise a Doubt, is as good as to make a Demonstration.

If such Men as these are allowed to judge, no doubt but the cause would go against us: But this is setting a Malefactor

factor upon the Bench, and calling his accomplices upon the Jury; and therefore we have reason to except against their Verdict: for it is not their Judgment that determines them, but their Vice. Let them but live according to the established rules of Reason, and then they would never make a doubt of the truth of our Religion.

The Heathen Philosophers, those venerable Men, whom they would injuriously draw into their Party, and force to Patronize their Opinions, would have been ashamed of such Disciples. These were Men of Learning, and Men of Vertue too; and all these have fairly yielded up the Cause, and submitted to the Christian Faith, when their Philosophy was at the highest pitch, when all the Learning, and all the Power, and indeed all the World, but Truth, was on their side. But great was Truth, and it did prevail against those famous Champions of infidelity: And must it truckle to these puny pretenders now? are these fit Advocates to maintain a baffled Cause? *Be not deceiv'd*; let not a *Communication* that is so *Evil* and so empty too, *corrupt your Manners*, and insult

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your Faith, and bid defiance both to God and Man.

Religion is not a question fit to be decided in a *Scorners Chair*. *Good Manners* are not a proper subject for a jest : To see profane Men playing with such Sacred things, is as absurd a sight, as to see an Ass cloath'd in Purple, or a ridiculous Animal adorn'd with the Sword of Justice, and an Imperial Crown : 'Tis an affront to Majesty, which all wise Men would look upon with indignation ; and the rather, because it may draw some foolish Men into a disesteem of Government, and Law, and make them despise the Sword of Justice, till they come to feel it.

There is a solemnity due both to Law, and Religion : And if they are not treated with Ceremony, they will lose their Respect ; but it is we that shall prove the losers by it. If we hear a Man crying down all Rule, and Government, we are so wise, as to conclude that he has a design either upon our Bodies, or Estates and to look upon him as an Enemy : And why are we not as wise, when we hear him

him crying down Religion; why do we not conclude that he has a design to *corrupt our Manners*, which are more valuable to us, than either our Bodies, or Estates? And yet such Men we can admit for our nearest Companions, nay, sometimes embrace for our dearest Friends.

But be not deceiv'd, 'tis no act of Friendship to destroy our Souls, 'tis no good communication that corrupts Good Manners: If therefore we find that our diversion has brought us into this dangerous snare, 'tis high time, either to fly the Pit for the securing of our Manners, or to pray, The Lord have mercy upon our Souls.

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 ACTS XIV. 15.

We also are men of like passions with you.

TH E great business of Religion is to mortifie our Lusts, by the help of Grace, and subdue our Passions, those infirmities of our Nature, and bring them in subjection to the Holy Spirit, whose fruits are *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness, Temperance*; as our Apostle tells us in another place: And yet after all the advances which we can make in Vertue, and all the advantages which a pure well practis'd Religion can confer upon us, the best proficient in Grace may still joyn hands with the disciples of Nature, and say, *we also are men of like passions with you.*

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These words were spoken by the Apostles, *Paul*, and *Barnabas*, to the Men of *Lycaonia*, to convince them that they were not Gods, and to restrain the people from offering Sacrifices to them: the Confession was very modest, and ingenuous, and the thing was very true: And from hence I shall endeavour to prove.

1. That the most sanctified Professors of Religion are yet subject to Passions as well as other Men.

2. That it is not for the Honour of our Religion to dissemble these Passions, tho in doing so we could gain honour to ourselves: And

3. That since our Passions are neither to be dissembled, nor suppress'd, therefore we must take care that they be so order'd, as may serve best for the uses of Religion.

1. It may seem strange perhaps, that a sanctifi'd Apostle, who is renew'd by the Holy Ghost, and endow'd with all the graces of the Gospel, should yet make open profession of his Passions, and so disgrace all those gifts which he

is partaker of. For Passion is nothing else but a violent assault upon our Reason, a turbulent motion in our hearts; and if this must still take place upon us, notwithstanding all the Prerogatives of our Religion, and in spite of all the assistances of the Spirit, where is the fruit of that *meekness, and gentleness and temperance* which are not only the Ornaments, but the Essentials of a Christian life.

Yet so it is, that the very best of Men are subject to Passions and Infirmities: And this is a truth which all good Men will confess, and are not ashamed to own it: And only Bad Men will deny it, because they know themselves more obnoxious than other Men. It is the consciousness of their guilt, that makes them plead not guilty, and whosoever is over solicitous to deny his infirmities, gives us just reason to suspect that he is most shamefully infirm.

When we come to Heaven, where our Souls shall be purified, and refined, no doubt but we shall shake off these distempers of our Nature: But in the mean time, while we are in the body, they will come like Diseases upon our spirits

spirits, and grow like Excrefcences upon our flesh, and are too deeply rooted in our senses, for either our Reason, or Religion to root them out. *Moses* was the meekest Man alive, and yet he slew an Egyptian in his Anger. *David* was the devoutest Man alive, and yet even in his Devotion we find him transported sometimes with Hatred: Our Saviour was the Patientest Man alive, and yet he was once overwhelm'd with sorrow. And not to insist upon the particular infirmities of particular Men, the Apostles in my Text tell the Heathens of *Lycania*, in general terms, *we also are Men of like passions with you.*

By all which we are taught, that Religion was design'd only to improve, but not to extinguish Nature: It is but grafting upon the old Stock, and tho the Grace of God may transplant a Man, yet he must not expect to be transform'd till he comes to Glory.

It was this very thing which rais'd the Controversie, and kept up the debate, between the two famous Sects of Philosophers of old: the one was for governing the Passions of Men, and keeping them

them under ; and their design was good : The other requir'd that they should be totally abolisht, and rooted out ; and that project always prov'd impracticable. For the whole drift of their Doctrine in plain terms, was no more than this, That they were not contented with their Nature, as God had made it to their hands, but were for making Man anew, after an Image of their own. But it was this overstraining of their point, that made their lives uncomfortable, and their Doctrines uncouth ; and by the aukward figure which their Philosophy made in the world, they gave us a demonstration, that tho Nature may be manag'd, yet it will not be forc'd.

Nay, tho it were a possible thing for a Man to force his nature, and divest himself wholly of his Passions, yet 'tis a question whether the thing were desirable or no. They are the proper season of our Souls, which would be very insipid, and flat without them : The proper motive to encourage, and stir us up to good works, without which (as our Constitution now stands) our Reason would be too weak to support our Vertue, and Man at best would be but a heavy, sluggish, unactive Creature.

But

But to this a *Stoick* may object, that our Passions incline us to evil works, as well as to Good : That they lead us into dangers, and betray us unto sin, and therefore 'tis fit they should be rooted out.

Indeed it must be confess'd, that all our sins do proceed from some misguided Passion ; but then it must be confess'd withall, that God made us subject unto sin, and it is not for Man to say to his Creator, *why hast thou made me thus?* He could have put another kind of constitution into us, and set us above temptations ; but he made us subject to these Passions on purpose that they might serve for the exercise of our Religion, that by a due management of our selves between our vicious inclinations to chuse the Evil, and our Religious endeavours to pursue the Good, we might try our Obedience, and recommend our Vertue. Did we lie under a natural necessity of doing good, what honour could our good works bring to God : And if we had no temptation to do evil, what praise could the eschewing of this evil bring to our selves? 'Tis nothing but the difficulty,
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and danger of an enterprize, that makes it honourable, and there can be no conquest, where there is no opposition.

But to this again it may be objected, that our Passions make us more liable to Evil than to Good, more likely to be conquer'd, than to conquer: And therefore 'tis good to be on the safer side.

And yet even this is no argument that therefore our Passions should be rooted out; for we find upon Record, that the greatest Saints have been subject to the greatest failings: Nay, 'tis this Sense of their failings that has made them the greater Saints: That the Seeds of both Good and Evil lie blended together in their Nature, and the same warmth of Constitution has given life to both.

No Man was more exemplary in his Vertue than *David*; and no Man more notorious in his Vice. No Man more Glorious in his undertakings than *St. Peter*; and no Man more shameful in his Falls: And since the Excellencies of these Men have done more honour to God, and more service to his Church, than their failings

failings have done harm, it is not advisable, either in Religion, or in common prudence, to extirpate those Passions which gave rise to both, and so destroy the Good and Evil both together.

But to this also they may object, that we deserve to be punish'd for the Evil, but do not deserve to be rewarded for the Good: And therefore if our Passions, which are the occasion of both, were utterly discarded, it would be better for Us.

And yet, even upon this account we have no reason to complain. For no doubt but God in the judgment which he passes upon Men, makes allowance for the difference of their Constitutions: For *He knows whereof we are made*, and remembers of what dust it is. He considers that every Man's composition inclines him strongly, some to one, and some to another Passion: And do we think that he expects the same kind of performances from both? This is making him a hard Master indeed, and not content with what our Talent will naturally produce. This is expecting interest from us, not accor-

according to our ability, but according to his Arbitrary Will.

Do we think, for instance, that he expects the same temper of mind, the same evenness, and steddiness of spirit, from a Sanguine Man, as he does from the cold and Flegmatick? The Scripture examples do not tell us so: Or do we think that he requires the same fervent Zeal, and flights of Devotion, from the Flegmatick, as he does from the warm, and Sanguine? The Flegmatick would be sorry to have it so. Tho both are bound to struggle with their infirmities, yet nature will be nature still, and make us sometimes apt to fall: And it is some excuse if we fall on the right side; I mean, that side to which our nature most inclines us: And that will not only be a good plea for obtaining our pardon, but will make us amends some other way. For if our constitution leads us to some certain sins, let us follow it a little farther, and it will equally incline us to some certain virtues: And if we weigh the one against the other, the balance of our nature will be even. But for Men to cross their constitution, and sin against the current

current of their nature, for a flegmatick Man to be intemperate, or a sanguine Man to be indevout, to have all the evil of our Passions, and nothing of the Good, this is indeed an unpardonable thing.

And here we cannot but admire the excellent constitution of the Gospel, above all other Religions in the world, for being so exactly calculated to the nature and abilities of Men; and requiring nothing of us, as necessary to our Salvation, but what we are able to perform: It gives us the best encouragement to be Vertuous; and yet does not condemn us for every Vice: It shews us the true way to subdue our Passions; and then shews us a pardon for the irregularity of those Passions which we could not subdue.

Indeed, our Saviour's coming upon earth, and dying for us, is a plain intimation, that there are such vicious principles within us, as cannot be subdued: For if we did not lie under a moral impossibility of avoiding sin, there had been no need of so extraordinary a Redemption.

This

This we may call the fundamental notion of the Gospel : And accordingly it is observable, that in the account which *St. Matthew* gives of our Saviours Genealogy, there are but four Women mention'd, and two or three of them were notorious, Why was this, but that the Penitent might be encourag'd to hope in God, and take Sanctuary in the Gospel, notwithstanding their Frailties and Passions, since our Blessed Saviour was pleas'd to derive his Blood from three Women that were recorded sinners.

Nay after the Gospel was preach'd upon earth, *and the time of Reformation* come, how many frailties of the Apostles themselves do we find upon Record ? frailties of those Men, that were immediately inspir'd by the Holy Ghost : Frailties of those very Men, that are propos'd to us as most eminent examples of Piety, and Religion. How many failings has *St. Peter* recorded of himself, in his Gospel according to *St. Mark* : How many more do we find of him, and his Brethren, in the Acts of the Apostles : How hot was the contest between Him, and *St. Paul*, who withstood him to the face :

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How

How sharp was the contention between St. *Paul*, and St. *Barnabas*? In my Text we find them both together, promoting the Honour of God, like friends, and modestly declaring, that they were subject to *passions like other men*: And in the very next Chapter, they made their words good, and were so angry with one another, that they parted upon it.

Why are these things noted in God's Book, but for our particular notice? Why do they stand there upon perpetual record, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, but to inform us, that there is nothing perfect upon earth: That they who have the greatest proportion of Grace, will still retain a taint of their Nature: That tho our Vertue be never so strongly guarded, yet Passion will ever and anon be creeping in: And from hence there are three things to be learnt.

1. That we must not cast off our trust in God, nor be discouraged from performing the Duties of Religion, if we do find that our Passions sometimes break in upon us: For so they did upon the Apostles themselves: And if we could but come to be Men of *like Vertues*, 'tis
no

no matter if we are Men of *like Passions* also with them.

2. We must not condemn other Men for Passions, tho they are not the same Passions which we are subject to our selves. For tho we are apt to judge of all Men by our own standard, and to despise them for being subject to those frailties from which we our selves are free ; yet we also *are men of like passions with them*, tho not of the same ; and therefore we ought to judge favourably of their failings, as we hope God will judge of Ours.

3. The next thing which we learn from hence is, that it is not for the honour of our Religion , to dissemble , or deny these Passions, tho in doing so we could gain honour to our selves : And this is the

Second general remark which we made upon my Text. The Apostles *Barnabas* and *Paul*, having wrought a miraculous Cure at *Lystra*, upon an Impotent Man, the People concluded they could be nothing less than Gods ; and accordingly the Sacrifices were preparing for them.

Had they been so ambitiously inclin'd, never had Men a fairer opportunity to be deifi'd: But they Modestly, and Zealously declin'd the offer, and not only disclaim'd the title of Gods, but proclaim'd their own failings too. *We also are men of like passions with your selves.*

Now the use which I shall make of this Remark is, not to dissuade you from the Ambition of being accounted Gods, there is no great danger of this, in our age, when Men are more inclin'd to Profaneness, than Idolatry. But yet there are those who affect to be counted Godly Men, without sin, and without passion, and they may receive very proper instruction from my Text: There they may learn, that Vertue and Humility must always go together, and if they were but as Pious as the Apostles, they would be as Modest too.

Certainly there is no sin so odious as Hypocrisie, no Passion is ever so dangerous, as when it is conceal'd: When it lies lurking at our hearts, and has nothing else to do, it must be hatching mischief. Certainly there is not so dishonourable a thing in Nature, as assum-
ing

ing an undue honour to our selves: For tho we should carry on the disguise never so artificially for a while, and the world applauds us for it, yet the Vizor will fall off at last, and then all their applause turns to indignation, and all our Pride ends in Shame.

If the Apostles had so pleas'd, they might have accepted of those Sacrifices that were prepared for them. But had the Men of *Lystra* follow'd them to *Antioch*, and there seen the Passions which they were really guilty of, they would never have been blam'd for stoning them after that, and casting them out of their City. For all frailties are excuseable in Man; but a failing God, and a falling Angel, are never to be restor'd again.

And yet, if the dishonour, the danger, and disgrace of Hypocrisie, was only to our selves, it would not be so Criminal as it is. But it reflects upon Religion too, and makes that despicable in the sight of Men, and God himself is dishonour'd by those honours which we take unto our selves. So disagreeable, so nauseous a Creature is a supercilious Zealot,

lot, a demure pretender to perfection, that Profaneness it self is not a more indecent sight, and Vice will always get ground upon it.

We are too apt of our selves to be puff'd up, and therefore God instituted a holy Religion on purpose to pull us down; to shew us the vileness of our Nature, and to convince us of the malignity of our sins, and to teach us to give God the Glory, and to take the Shame unto our selves. We are too ready to call our selves God's, but that *these messengers of Satan are sent to buffet us into better manners*, and our passions are a demonstration that *we are but Men*.

For this reason God has inseparably annex'd them to our Nature, and made them a necessary condition of our Mortality: There is no living in this world without them, and that sore place which cannot be cur'd, the best way is to keep it open. We may cover the eye-sore if we please, and stifle the anguish if we can; but all our Experiments will only make it worse, and whosoever goes about to cure Nature, only brings a reproach upon his Art.

All

All Men must needs despise a Religion that is not consistent with Humanity, and when they find its Precepts are not practicable, they will believe its Author is not true. For how can a Religion, that does such open violence to our Nature, ever gain credit in the World, or be thought to proceed from that God who gave us Life and Being.

To bid a Man put off all his Passions, never to be Angry, nor Sorry, nor Afraid, is to bid him put off his Flesh; such a command as could never come from that God who put it on. 'Tis true, he has given us some restraining Precepts, *as not to be Angry unto a sin, not to be Sorrowful as men without hope: Not to be Afraid where no fear is:* But to renounce these Passions quite, is more than God commands, because 'tis more than Man can do: 'tis more than our Saviour did himself: And surely there is nothing which our Blessed Saviour did, but may very well become the Profoundest Philosopher, or the Eminentest Divine.

Indeed whosoever pretends to be void of Passion, must needs be either something More than Man, or something Less:

But for a Man to be really subject to passions, and yet conceal them, that he may be thought a God, or a God-like Man, is the certain way to make him Arrogant, and Crafty, and Malicious, and such a God as is very like the Devil.

The sum of all is this : God has put passions, as a certain ferment into our Nature, and that for several useful profitable ends : But the best things in Nature, are subject to be abus'd, and so are our Passions too : Therefore we must endeavour to correct them, and keep them under ; but to extirpate them is impossible, and to conceal them is Dangerous ; and after all our vain attempts, neither the extirpating, nor the concealing them, would be worth our while. Could we but keep them in subjection, the best way is to give them, upon just occasions, a little vent ; for to think it a commendable thing to be utterly void of Passion, is a great mistake : and 'tis a greater, to think that our Passions are inconsistent with *Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness*, and the other *fruits of the holy spirit* : for all these Graces are heighten'd very much, by that inward sense which we have, and that

that outward confession which we make,
of those frailties of our Nature.

Besides, it is not a sign of *Meekness* in a Man, to be utterly void of Anger; for that may be the effect of his Constitution: But to have his Anger at good command, that is the fruit of Grace. It is not a sign of *Goodness* in Man, to have no Passion in him, for such a Man is apparently Good for nothing at all. He does not hate his Brother, 'tis true: But then he does not love him neither. He does not oppress his Neighbour perhaps; but withal, he neither pities, nor relieves him: And so a Man without Passion, proves like the senseless Log in the Fable, which after the Frogs had chosen him for their King, they thought fit to change him for a devouring Stork. And now having seen that our Passions cannot be rooted out, and must not be disguis'd, let us consider in the

Third place, How they are to be us'd; how they may be manag'd so as to be serviceable to the uses of Religion: And in order to this we must take care of two things.

I. That

1. That they be well Disciplin'd:
And,

2. That they be well employ'd.

1. If we would have our Passions made useful to us, we must take care that they be well regulated, and subdued, and brought into governable order: For till this is done, they will serve for no good use at all. All that they can do, is but to pervert our Will, and darken our Understanding: To overpower our Reason, and transport us beyond our selves, and so afford us a lame excuse for those follies, and extravagancies, which we are guilty of in these raving fits.

And now, to cure us of this madness, the best method is, that which the *Lacedaemonians* prescribed to cure their young Men of Drunkenness: Namely, to shew them a Drunken Man, and let them see the beastliness of the Vice, and that they found the best way to make them detest it: And certainly to look calmly, and deliberately, upon the Indecencies, the Absurdities which a passionate Man commits,

mits, is enough to make us abhorr the passion, and turn us all Philosophers.

But if this should seem a desperate Cure, and we think it unsafe to come in a Madman's way ; at lest let us, in our cooler calmer moods, reflect upon the passions which we are guilty of our selves, and consider seriously the many inconveniencies which they expose us to. How uneasie and vexatious they are to Us ; how reproachful and hateful they make Us to other Men ? How they debarr us from all use of our Reason ; silence all the Precepts of Religion ; and come with such a furious assault upon us, that they hardly leave us our own Senses at Command. That they over-turn all the Conduct of our lives, run us headlong upon all kind of dangers, and when our passions are upon the Spurr, destruction it self cannot stop their course. Surely this is enough to make us either afraid, or asham'd of following so blind, so mad a guide.

If this will not do, let us consider next, what trifles they commonly are, which raise all this uproar within us : What bubbles they are, which we pursue

sue with so much eagerness, and affection. what is the addition of a little Vineyard, to a Man that has a whole Kingdom of his own? And yet for want of this, *Ahab* could not eat his Bread, and underwent more vexation for that little spot of ground, than all his whole Kingdom was worth. What signifies the respect, and obeisance of one single Man, to him that is Principal Favorite in an Imperial Court, and has a hundred and twenty seven Provinces at Command? Yet all this avail'd nothing unto *Haman*, but as long as he saw *Mordecai* sitting in the Gate, all his Favour and Preferment could not make him easie.

And who would think that so insignificant a trifle should be able to give us so much disturbance, that such a handfull of Cloud should raise such a mighty Storm? who can chuse but smile to see a Man grow restless, and fretful, impatient and clamorous, only for a bauble to throw away? To be at so much trouble and pains to get it; and after all, it is not worth the while to keep it? To be as zealously solicitous, and as really concern'd as if his Life were at stake, when

when all the purchase is not worth the paring of his nails?

Nay whatever the value of the purchase is, yet it cannot excuse us for so vehement a pursuit, so hot a contention. Tho' it be the honour of God, and the interests of his Religion that we are contending for, as is the manner of our times, yet even here our passions may easily over-reach, and by imprudent management, we may prejudice a good cause. For certainly, without moderation, we can do neither honour to God, nor service to Religion.

Indeed we read of some Heathen Priests, that when they began to be inspir'd by their false Gods, they commonly shew'd it by Swelling, and Raving, and Foaming at the Mouth: But a zeal for the true God must be expressed another way, by such a passion as is consistent with *Meekness, and Gentleness, and Peace*: Such a passion as may be infus'd into us by *the spirit of the Lamb*.

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In a word, whatever the occasion is, we must never suffer the passion to get the upper-hand of Us, nor to out-run our reason. 'Tis unruly of it self, and therefore our business is to temper it, and keep it in; to manage it with Bit and Bridle, lest it fall upon us. And when our passions are thus Subdued, then are they fit to be employ'd in the service of God, and may be very useful to us in the exercises of Religion, which was the

2d. Thing propos'd; namely, How our passions must be employ'd. We have a foolish saying amongst us, that if we have once rais'd a Devil; we must be sure to find him some work to do, or else he will do us hurt. I am apt to think, that this observation was first made upon the Passions of Men, which are a sort of Evil spirit, got within us, that is too easily rais'd; and then the saying is very profitable and true, That they will do us much mischief if we do not set them something else to do; that is, if we do not find them proper objects to work upon: and these objects are no where to be found, but in Religion.

Religion. But here our passions may be of excellent use,

1. For the promoting of our Vertue.
And,

2. For the heightning of our Devotion.

And, 1. 'Tis certain that when our passions are well regulated and reformed, they are great assistances and encouragements to Vertue. Our Reason is a cold and heavy principle, that moves us but slowly to our Work; but Passion puts an eagerness into our Desires, and a warmth into our Prosecutions, and makes the work go chearfully and vigorously on.

Whensoever therefore we find our selves hotly and passionately engag'd in the pursuit of our Temporal Affairs, in the advancing of our Wealth, or promoting of our Pleasure, let us consider how much greater a work we have to do, and turn our heat that way, and then we shall have cause to give God thanks that we have these Passions to assist us.

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Our Reason has but little to do in the forming of our minds, and bringing us to a Vertuous Religious Life ; 'tis our Passions and Affections that must do the work, for till they begin to move, our Reason is but like a Chariot when the Wheels are off, that is never like to perform the Journey.

Our Reason has not much to learn, and is very easie to be taught ; only our Passions are obstinate, and our Affections perverse, and it is from this crookedness of our Will, that we always find it harder to be Perswaded, than Inform'd. But when we have once got our Passions at command, then every mountain is removed, all the difficulty of our work is over, and there is no Vertue at which we may not come with ease, when we have none of these obstacles to stand between us.

From hence I shall draw this one Conclusion, and leave it upon you as a standing rule, that can never be too frequently inculcated ; and that is, that you would allow the word of God a free passage to your Passions, and Affections,

as well as to your understanding : And as you have one ear open for the Doctrinal part, so you would always keep another for Exhortation. *These things teach and exhort*, says the Apostle ; but if we would only be Taught, and not Exhorted, we do the work of the Lord by halves, nay, we leave the best half of the work undone.

Lastly, As our Vertue, so our Devotion also is much indebted to our Passions, and a true Religious zeal towards God, is nothing else but the kindly workings of a Pious and warm Affection.

'Tis true, there are in Religion such substantial motives to Piety, as are enough to make every Man Devout : And therefore tho it is a usual, yet 'tis no commendable thing, for slegmatick Men to excuse the coolness of their zeal, by laying the fault upon the coldness of their Constitution.

And yet it must be confess'd, that a Passionate Man's Zeal is the soonest kindled, and the same warmth of Constitution that inclines him to be Intemperate, if it be well manag'd, will incline

T him

him to be Devout : And therefore we have no reason to be either ashamed, or afraid of those Passions, which God has put into our Nature, since we find by comfortable experience, that they may turn to the most excellent means of Grace: If we please, they may prove encouragements to our Vertue, and helps to our Devotion, and may serve to promote our *Meekness*, *Gentleness*, *Goodness*, and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

What I have said upon this point, of our Passions in general, I shall illustrate by two or three Particulars, and so Conclude.

As, 1. In Anger. This is a Passion that lies under a very evil name, a mutinous turbulent companion, that is always engaging us in one quarrel or other, and one would think it might be better to live without it.

And yet even this Passion is of excellent use, not only for the securing of our Persons, against such Indignities as are not fit to be put upon us ; but it stands as a Guard and Centinel to our Vertue : Examines every Action that passes by,
and

and tells us which are to be allow'd of, and which to be disapprov'd; and so forewarns us not to be surpriz'd by Vice, nor drawn into an approbation of those things which are pernicious to us.

Sometimes again our Anger turns upon our selves, and grows hot against the sin of our own Kiotom; and by the help of this Passion, we may cast out an evil Spirit, which our Reason either could not, or would not venture on.

What has been said of Anger, may in great part be appli'd to Hatred, Disdain, and Pride, Passions which occasion most of that Evil, which we do; and yet by prudent management they may turn to a very Religious use, and do us much good. Only Envy, and Malice, and Detraction, serve for no good use at all, but are all pure Vice, without any mixture of Vertue. They take their seat, not in the Heart of Man, but in the Spleen; and the Spleen, they say, is the only superfluous part of our Body, as these spleenetick humours make the only useless Passions of our Soul.

2. Another troublesome Companion to man is Fear : A treacherous Passion, that is set on purpose to give us fair warning of our dangers, and yet it of en gives us needless disturbance by false fires, and represents our dangers nearer, and greater than they are. It awakens our Jealousie, increases our Apprehension, and anticipates our Pain : Upon all which accounts, one would think it might very well be spar'd.

And yet if we would but set this Passion right, and apply it to its proper Object, there is not a more noble, more useful Principle in our Nature. 'Tis the foundation of all Religion said a Heathen Poet. *'Tis the beginning of Wisdom*, says the Divine Psalmist : and I wonder at the confidence of them, who deny those good works to be commendable which proceed from the Fear of God, when *David* expressly tells us, in the very next words, that *they have a good understanding who do thereafter, and the praise of it endures for ever.*

Now those Men whose constitution inclines them to be Fearful, have a great advantage upon this account : If they are
afraid

afraid of a little transient pain, a touch of the Launcet, or a prick of the Sword, how much more tenderly must they be affected, with the apprehension of Eternal Death, and Insufferable Torments: If we are so fearful of disobliging a Man, who has only a little longer arm than we, and may use it to our disadvantage when we come within his reach, how much more shall we stand in awe of God, who is always present with us, and by the very word of his mouth can speak us Dead.

If we are so apt to be terrifi'd with every little accident, from the Wind, the Earthquake, and the Fire, how can we chuse but be astonish'd at the very thoughts of that Day, when the Earth it self shall fail from under us, and *the Heavens shall melt away with frevent heat*: If we are so subject to be fearful, let us be afraid of these things, and then our fear will prove our best preservative. Do but set the Passion in the right way, and then in God's name let it take its course.

And what has been said of Fear, may be apply'd to Sorrow, Shame, and Trouble, and all those Passions which concern themselves about the Evil which we suffer.

Lastly, I shall mention but one Passion more, and that is Pity : A Passion that seems to be put into us on purpose to make way for Charity, that most excellent Christian Duty : A Passion that makes us partakers of the Grievs, and Fears, and Pains of other Men ; and therefore is properly called Compassion.

Now this extending of the Object, does indeed bring such a vast retinue of dependants, such a rent charge of trouble and expence upon us, that for this reason the Heathen Philosophers thought it fit to be rooted out. But if a Man may be a good Philosopher I am sure he can never make a good Christian without it : And therefore the Apostles here declar'd they were subject to *Passions like other Men*, and particularly, it was the Passion of Pity which gave occasion for this declaration in my Text : It was the curing of a poor impotent Man, that made them pass for Gods.

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'Twas the most natural error that Idolaters could be subject to: For there is nothing so apt to beget in us a true veneration, and esteem, as the relieving of other Men's wants, and making their misfortunes to be our own. Nothing makes us look so like God, as having a provident care, a tender concern for the good of his Creatures. This is so kindly, so generous a Passion, and with-all, so Religious a Duty, that 'tis hard to say whether it be most nearly related, to Nature, or to Grace: It is indeed the top and Perfection of them both; 'Tis that *Love* which leads up all the Graces of the Gospel, and brings us to *Joy, Peace, Gentleness, Goodness*, and the rest.

Love is the tenderest affection of the flesh, and the first fruits of the Spirit: Therefore let us shew our Love in the most natural, and most religious way, and that is, by our Pity. There are many poor, and many impotent Men amongst us, that stand in need of our relief; and tho we are not so well qualify'd to relieve them as the Apostles in my Text, tho gifts of healing, and Miracles we have none, yet Silver and Gold we Have, and

Pity we should have too; and therefore what we have, that let us give unto them.

In a word, let those who please, magnifie themselves for their great Temper, and think to pass for Gods, by being void of Passion; but God grant that we may shew our selves to be Men, by employing our Passions well, like the Apostles in my Text; that is, by confessing them to the honour of God, and exercising them for the good of his People.

ACTS

A C T S XXVI. 29.

And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that bear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

ONE of the greatest advantages which we receive by reading the Holy Scriptures is, that we find there, not only Precepts and Commandments to instruct us in the substantial parts of our Religion, but Examples also to direct us in the ordinary occurrences of our Life. For there may be Vertue, or Vice, in those which we account little things; and an indecorum is a fault in Religion, as well as in Behaviour,

Amongst

Amongst the other examples, which the Scripture supplies us with, there is not a more useful one than that of *St. Paul* the Apostle: A Man most eminent in the Faith, most regular in his Life, and most accomplish'd in his Conversation; as we may discover by the whole History of his Acts.

In my Text particularly, we have a famous instance of it; where we find him working upon King *Agrippa*, with all the Rhetorick of the Schools, and all the Civility of the Court, in hopes to make him a perfect Convert, after he had declar'd himself to be *almost perswaded to be a Christian*.

'Twas a very charitable Work, and a very commendable method; and both of them are very worthy of our observation. For certainly 'tis the business, not only of an Apostle, but of every Private Man, to endeavour to promote the Faith of Christ, and as much as in him lies, to reform a sinful world.

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And it is a business to which the world at present seems very much inclined. Here the Harvest is not only very great, but the Labourers also are very many; and 'tis hard to say which is most ripe in our days, Sin or Censure, Corruption or Reproof.

Nay as the thing is usually manag'd, 'tis hard to say which of these deserves the most to be reprov'd. For when this reforming spirit proceeds, as now it generally does, not from Religion, but from Humour, the Censure proves not only ineffectual unto others, but it self is turned into sin.

And yet of necessity sin must be reprov'd, otherwise our silence will be interpreted as an approbation, and encouragement of the Fact; and so we involve our selves in the guilt, and Condemnation of the Malefactor: And accordingly *St. Austin* tells us, that one reason why God some times destroys the Just with the Wicked, is because they saw their wickedness, and let it pass by them unprov'd. So very necessary is our Duty in this point, but withal so very nice, that we may easily
fall

fall into sin on either hand, either by Slighting, or by Censuring the vicious practices of Mankind.

And therefore that we may avoid the danger of both extremes, I shall draw some Rules of Direction from this Instance in my Text, how to behave ourselves in this great Work of Reformation, so as it may prove effectual to the Honour of God, and the Good of his People. And to this end I shall shew.

1. The necessity of the Work it self, and the great occasion which there is to reform the World.

2. The Gentle manner how it must be done, according to the method us'd by the Apostle in my Text.

3. I shall prove that this method is most agreeable to the general current of the Word of God, and therefore the fittest to be observ'd : And,

4. That it is most suitable to the Nature of Man, and therefore the most likely to take effect.

And,

And, 1. As for the great need there is to reform the World, there are few Men in the World so Senseless, but that they see it, and to their Sorrow Feel it too. For of all Plagues that ever happened to Mankind, the worst of all, and indeed the cause of all the rest, is Sin : A Plague which we have brought upon our selves, an infection which by our negligence we have suck'd into our Souls, and by our perverseness have work'd into our very Natures, and there given it so fast a hold, that 'tis past our skill to work it out.

'Tis an evil which strikes so deep, and spreads so wide, that all our Art is too little to root it up, all our Industry is never able to keep it down : After all our endeavours, it grows still upon our hands, and whilst we *lay the ax to the root* of one Tree, we see the deadly Plant rise up in another place.

The Soul of Man is indeed so fatally over-run with sin, our Lusts and Passions have so far gain'd head upon us, that it is not possible to subdue them all ; and all the ordinary progress which we make
in

in Vertue, is but to run from Vice to Vice: When we are weary of one sin, we commonly take shelter in another; and like diseased Men, we often change our side, yet still we keep our Bed.

Sometimes our Lusts prevail against our Covetousness, and sometimes our Covetousness gets the better of our Lusts: Sometimes we give up our selves to the immoderate pleasures of the flesh; and when that pleasure is worn off, we are apt to indulge a peevish intemperate Spirit.

Thus we run round in an enchanted circle of iniquity, and are always moving, but yet we get no ground: And if we can but subdue one vicious Passion, by the help of another, we think it a noble Conquest, and account our selves very Vertuous Men. In our Poverty we exclaim against the Rich, and in our Riches we despise the Poor; and howsoever our Fortunes alter, yet it makes but little alteration in our Minds: We are still but where we were, either the Vanity, or the Vexation sticks fast unto us, and gives us such disturbance, that we know not *either how to be abas'd or how to abound.*

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From hence proceed all those confusions which distract the world, and disorder the Course of Nature: What from Envy, Malice, and Greediness on the one hand, and what through Pride, Ambition, and Usurpation on the other, our Reputation and Fortunes are not safe, nay, our very Lives and Liberties are in danger, and the Peace and Quietness of the World is perpetually expos'd by the ungovernable Passions, and insatiable desires of Men.

Thus God makes our very Sin to be our Punishment, and by a most righteous Judgment, even here in the Flesh, he makes us Suffer according to what we Do. As we seek to maintain Our Lusts at the expence of Others, so he makes Their Lusts to feed upon Us, and their Passions to clash with ours, and in this tumultuous manner we keep up our Spirits to an unnatural ferment, and wage a civil War amongst us, and are always preying upon one another.

And now, since the World is so generally corrupted, and these corruptions are so destructive of the general Peace,
since

since the Vices of other Men have so ill an Aspect upon our own Affairs, 'tis no wonder if every Man sets up for a Reformer, even those very Men who have most need to be reform'd themselves.

There is hardly a Man alive, but is very sensible of the evil Effects of Sin, especially of the Sins of other Men, how favourable soever he may be to his own: And there is hardly a Man alive that can forbear to exclaim against it, tho' in doing so he usually condemns himself; so odious a thing is Sin, that every Man looks upon it with some kind of detestation; every Man's mouth is open against the Wickedness of the Times: And in this, both the Sinner, and the Saint agree.

But then there is a great difference in the methods which they observe, and by the manner of the Correction, we may easily discover the Nature of the Man: The one reproves the failings of his Brother with a *spirit of meekness*, and manages him with a gentle hand, and so brings him at last to a virtuous Compliance: Whilst the other treats him, not as a Brother, but an Enemy; upbraids his Folly with such a supercilious zeal,

zeal, and reviles his faults with so intemperate a concern, as if he had an interest of his own to serve, and his rebukes proceeded not from Piety, but Design.

The one Pities, and the other Envyies the sins which he Corrects: one shews his Bowels of Compassion, while the other only shews his Teeth: The one, like wicked *Ham*, takes a pleasure in exposing the nakedness of his Father, and feeds his eyes with that unnatural prospect: The other, like religious *Shem*, turns his face away, and in his Charity endeavours to cover not only his Fathers, but his Brothers Faults.

And now which of these methods a Wise Man would chuse to follow, is the Second thing to be consider'd: And a point that is very easie to be determin'd. Our own reason tells us that a soft answer is most favourably heard, our own experience shews us that our Souls are soonest wrought upon by gentle means; and there is a tenderness in the hearts of Men, which makes them tractable when they are kindly us'd, tho they prove refractory, and averse to all harsh rugged applications.

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But for fear it should be said, that this Tenderness is a Failing, and this Good Nature a Fault in Man ; that it is only favouring our sins, and a pretence to secure our selves from those sharper methods which are necessary to reclaim us; we shall find that this gentle usage is recommended to us, and authoriz'd by St. Paul's conduct, and behaviour in my Text ; where we cannot but observe, and admire the Civility of his Argument, the Decency of his Address ; and from thence we may learn, that there is a degree of Courtship commendable even in an Apostle : *King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest : Tho God knows his belief was but after a very faint imperfect sort; But yet this Complement, as we may call it, of St. Paul's, did so far work upon him, and touch'd him so very near, that he was almost converted by it, Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.* To which St. Paul returns this respectful answer in my Text, such as the Quality, and the Courtesie of the King deserv'd, *I would to God that not only Thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.*

Where

Where it is very remarkable, that *St. Paul* does not presently fall on exclaiming against *Agrippa's* Court, nor inveighing against his personal Failings, and notorious Sins; does not upbraid him with his unlawful Love to *Berenice*, who was even then sitting by his side, nor tell him that he must first repent of his abominable Vices, before he can be almost a *Christian*; but turns his Stile to a softer strain, improves that Argument which he found most likely to take effect, and by the force of Good Manners endeavours to make the way for Faith.

He does not Threaten, but *Perswade* *Agrippa* to comply: Nay, he hardly takes upon him so much as to perswade the *King*, but only Wishes affectionately that he were a *Christian*, *I would to God thou wert not only almost, but altogether such as I*. And that the mean Circumstances under which the Apostle lay, might not spoil his Complement, he does not represent Christianity to him, as indeed it was at that time, in a state of Persecution, and Distress; does not invite him into Bonds, and Imprisonments; but would have him be a *Christian*, and

yet be Free : To be *such as I am, except those bonds* : Tho in all probability, nothing could have prov'd so beneficial to *Agrrippa*, as those very Bonds, nothing so likely to set him free from his unlawful Love.

And from hence we all may learn, that if we desire to reform the Manners of Men, or to improve their Faith, the true Christian Apostolical way is, not **Magisterially** to insult over their Failings, and impose upon their Belief; but to win them over by an easie Conversation, and engage their Affections first, before we hope to work upon their Understandings : For tho Truth is Powerful of its self, yet there must be something of Goodness to recommend it, there must be Charms to *perswade* the Man, as well as Demonstration to *Convince* him.

And what kind of effect such treatment as this is like to find, we may learn from the Success of the Apostle in my Text : Who tho he did not make the King a Convert by it, yet he did make him his Friend, which was something more than being *almost perswaded*. He pitied the Apostles Bonds, and wisht it had been

been in his power to release him, and was in so fair a way to be persuaded, that had St. *Paul* but been at liberty, no doubt but such another Conference would have made *Agrippa*, not only almost, but altogether Christian.

How much better a method was this, than that which was us'd by a certain Orator at *Jerusalem*, of whom *Josephus* gives this account, that after having accus'd *Agrippa* for an impure Man, and unfit to be admitted into the Temple, and being brought at last to make good his Charge, Face to Face, he had so little to say against *Agrippa*, that he had nothing to say for Himself.

And this is a point which deserves our most serious compassionate consideration. We live in such an age, when both the Opinions, and Affections of Men are unfortunately divided, and very little, or at best very unlikely endeavours are us'd to make them close again. We live in an age when Prejudice and Passion are kept up to an immoderate pitch, and almost all the sign of Vertue that is left amongst us, is only reviling the Vices of other Men.

How industriously do some Men labour to exasperate every Difference, and widen every Breach, and take a Pleasure, or a Pride, in setting one another at defiance : And by this means the Church of Christ is reduc'd to a miserable condition amongst us, so afflicted with *wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores*, that tho we had need to apply all the Balm in *Gilead* for its cure, yet we are always renewing of the Pain, and fretting of the Wound, and still keeping it open with needless Provocations.

'Tis this that puts Vertue out of Countenance, and brings Religion into Disrepute ; and where there is such implacable enmity maintain'd amongst Men, there can be no credit given to their Profession. If therefore we would restore the true Christian Faith and Practice once again, and establish Vertue in the World, we must take pattern by my Text, and shew a charitable Mind, a friendly Concern, for the Persons of those Men whom we endeavour to reclaim. *I would to God that all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.*

3. The

3. The third thing which I am to prove is, that this Gentle method is most agreeable to the general current of the Word of God, and more particularly suitable to the nature of the Gospel : And here we shall find, that the true Religion works it self most naturally into the hearts of Men, by gentle insinuations, and endearing means ; by the loveliness of its Doctrine it invites Converts into the Church, and wherethere is no Civility, there can be little or no Religion.

Indeed Religion seems principally design'd by God to Civilize the World, and make us Kind and Courteous to one another ; and therefore of all his illustrious Attributes, he has chosen his Mercy to be the Foundation of all our Religious Duties. *There is mercy with thee, says the Psalmist, and therefore shalt thou be feared.*

And accordingly the Son of God is represented to us under the emblem of a Lamb, and the Holy Spirit in the figure of a Dove, without Violence, without Gall, and whosoever has any

true sense of the Divinity, must needs apprehend it under these amiable Characters: And since the great work of Religion is to make us, in some measure, like to God, surely he that is most Charitable, and Meek, is also most Religious.

When God deliver'd his Law to the Children of *Israel*, and first establish'd his Church upon Earth, he did it by the hands of *Moses*, the meekest Man alive, as knowing that this is the temper which must recommend Religion, this is the Spirit which must keep the World in awe; and whosoever sits in *Moses's* Chair with any other Spirit upon him, dishonours the Function, and usurps the Place.

Once indeed, for some special ends of Providence, God rais'd up a Mighty Prophet *Elijah*, with an invincible fiery Spirit, to make way for a violent Revolution: But if any other Man pretends to *Elijah's* Mantle, to succeed him in that furious reforming Office, he must shew us such miracles as that Prophet did, or else we can hardly credit his Commission.

Nay,

Nay, we cannot but observe, how God did gently rebuke the Spirit even of this great *Elijah*, whom he had rais'd up, to convince Us that it was not to be drawn into an example. When the Prophet boasted of his mighty zeal for Religion, and told God how *very jealous he had been for the Lord of hosts, because the Children of Israel had forsaken his Covenant, and thrown down his Altar*, God caused a strong mighty Wind to pass before him, but he was not in the Wind; and after the Wind an Earthquake, but he was not in the Earthquake; and at last he discovered himself in the still small voice, *What dost thou here, Elijah!* And yet there are those, who think that Religion must always be attended with violent Commotions, and that a zeal for God has no way to shew it self, but in a boisterous Noise.

And how does this agree with the description which the Prophet gave of our Blessed Saviour? *Behold my servant whom I up-hold; mine Elect in whom my Soul delighteth, he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets, and a bruised reed he shall not break.* If this is the Character of Him in whom the

the Lord delighteth, surely the clamorous, tumultuous zealots are the Men whom his Soul abhors.

How do they answer the pattern which our Saviour set us in His Life? *Moses*, in his time, was the meekest Man alive; but Christ was as much meeker than he, as the Gospel is a more excellent and perfect Dispensation than the Law. How Charitable was his Soul, how kind and affable was his Conversation; and yet the World was then come to the very height of Wickedness, then the *iniquity of men was full*: But notwithstanding this, where do we find, throughout the whole History of his Life, the least taint of this angry censorious spirit.

Once indeed, and but once, he gave us an instance of his Zeal, and a very moderate one too, in driving the Money-Changers out of the House of God: And it was but reasonable so to do, for surely the Temple is no proper place for such sordid Mercenary Affairs. But when did he ever renounce the Society of Men, by reason of those sins and frailties, where-with they were justly chargeable.

'Tis

'Tis true, there are some Malignities in Humane Nature, which he could not bear; some Tempers, or rather Distempers, in the minds of insolent assuming Men, which are enough to provoke Meekness it self, such as our Saviour could not Think of, much less Speak of, but with Indignation: And tho we always find him converting freely and friendly, with Publicans and Sinners, yet the Pharisees, those great Reformers of the Age, mov'd his Soul to Anger, and shew'd that the Son of God could pardon all sins, sooner than a mistaken zeal, and an extraordinary pretence to Godliness.

And now, can any Christian pretend to be nicer in distinguishing between Good and Evil, than our Saviour was? Surely we are not more Vertuous than He, why then should we be more disturbed at the Vices of other Men: Surely we are not more Wise, why then should we reject His method of reclaiming sinners, by a *Spirit of Meekness*, and think that nothing but Anger and Out-rage can do the Work?

If

If our eyes are so very pure, *that we cannot behold iniquity*, let us but turn the prospect, and look into our own hearts, and there the very best of us may find iniquity enough to make us more angry with our selves, and more patient towards other Men.

We do indeed live in a very Foolish, and a very sinful World : And our Fathers did so before us : And yet I think the most enormous Sin of our Age, is this uncharitable censorious humour, of Judging, Condemning, and Exposing of our Brethren ; And the greatest Folly of our Age is, That we think there is some Vertue in doing so ; That we should take the liberty to give our passions vent, indulge an impotent ambitious Spirit, and discharge the Envy and Malice of our Hearts upon all the World about us, and at last call it a Zeal for Christianity, and put it all upon the score of Religion.

Indeed there is nothing of Religion in it ; it all proceeds from quite another Cause ; like a certain Faction that was at *Rome*, of which it was observ'd, that
tho

tho it pretended much to the Publick Good, yet it was Anger that hatch'd it, and Pride that nourish'd it, and Covetousness that brought it to maturity: And whereever we see a furious reforming Zeal, we may easily trace it up to the same Originals, and find that 'tis only Ambition, and Covetousness, and an immoderate love of this present World, that makes them Angry with worldly Men: And they are really guilty of that fault themselves, which they so loudly condemn in others. Just like that absurd Philosopher, who wrote a Book against the vanity of affecting a great Name, and yet had the vanity himself to set his Name unto his Book: So dextrous are some Men in censuring their own Vices, and charging them upon other Men, and making their Brethren suffer for those evils which pinch themselves.

. How very different was the behaviour of the Apostle in my Text? His Liberty and his Livelihood were lost, his Reputation question'd, and his Life in Danger: But yet he kept his Temper still, and when he came to speak for himself, he shew'd no angry resentment
against

against his Accusers, made no indecent reflections upon his Judge, but included them all in this affectionate Wish, this charitable Prayer, *I would to God that not only Thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.*

Could we but find such a temper as this, in them who are enemies to our Religion, I am sure there would be no Difference, and I believe there would be no Division amongst us. This is the temper which our Mother-Church recommends to all her Sons, and this is the temper with which She treats her Enemies ; and since They are of another Spirit, I shall only say, *I would to God that all those who Refuse to hear us this day, were altogether, or but almost such as we are.*

And now having prov'd that this Modesty of behaviour, this Civility of Religion, is most agreeable to the will of God, and therefore fittest to be observ'd ; I proceed in the

4. And

4. And last place, to shew that it is also most suitable to the Nature of Man, and most likely to have a good effect.

And here we cannot but admire the Constitution of the Gospel, above all other morall Disciplines that ever appear'd in the World before. There were several zealous Men, and great ones too, who formerly undertook to reform mankind: And several were the methods which they undertook to do it by. One hoped to Dispute them into Vertue: Another try'd to Laugh them out of Vice: And a Third thought that his crying would certainly make them also sorry for their sins. But all these Experiments fail'd; they Cry'd, and Laugh'd, and Disputed themselves *out* of the World, but did very little service *in it*.

But above all, the most unfortunate Undertaker of this kind, was *Diogenes* the *Cynick*, who endeavour'd to Snarle and Bark the world into his Opinion, and by the force of *Ill Manners*, thought to bring them to *Good*.

But

But the World was too Wise to be so wrought upon, and quickly found, by His Example, that if they should purchase Vertue by giving up their Good Nature, yet they should prove losers by the Change.

After all these fruitless attempts, our Saviour came, *and shew'd us a more excellent way.* He plac'd Religion upon another Bottom: Grounded his Gospel upon Charity: And taught us to bring Converts to his Church, by the force of Love, and the Charms of a Vertuous friendly Conversation. And this method prov'd so very suitable to the minds of Men, that it presently found a Good Effect; and wrought, as it needs must, a Mighty Reformation.

For there are few Men so obstinately bent upon their own way, but they can give a favourable ear to those advices which proceed from motives of Kindness, and Good-will. Love is the Passion that lies uppermost in our Soul, That is the soonest reach'd, and most easily affected, and whatsoever touches upon this string, strikes with pleasure upon our Hearts, and

and makes a delightful Concord. But Envy, and Hatred, and Despise, are so disagreeable to our nature, that we cannot chuse but look upon them with prejudice and aversion. Whatever motion comes from that hand, makes such an odious Discord, such an unwelcome Noise, that it only grates upon our heart, but makes no impression.

Whensoever therefore we undertake to correct our brethren for their faults, if we endeavour to amend them too, 'tis a very good design : But then it must be discreetly manag'd. We must take care not to give any unnecessary distast, or any suspicion of either private interest, or secret pride. For who can bear our reproofs, if we speak to others, only out of kindness to our selves, and blacken them, to set a Foil upon our own conceited Vertues.

But above all things, we must be sure to keep within the bounds of Truth ; and that we may do so, we must avoid all Personal reflections : For tho we argue never so well against the Vice, yet Prejudice easily makes us mistake the Man, and Passion always spoils the Argument :

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At this rate, we may rail against the Covetousness and Lusts of Men, as long as our breath can last; and all that we can get by doing so, is but to make them rail again, at our Folly, and Uncharitableness.

But if it be indeed their reformation which we desire, we must shew a regard unto their Persons, at the same time when we reflect upon their Vice: That is, we must Pity their infirmities, and be sorry for their sins, and endeavour to help them out by friendly admonitions, and affectionate Advice. Addresses of this kind will make their own way into our hearts, and sink deep into our Souls, and be sure to have a kindly operation there.

There is no resisting of a Medicine, that is so healing of itself, and so tenderly apply'd: There is no withstanding of the Truth, when it comes to us recommended by Love: Then the Sympathy works strongly upon our Spirits; and when our Affections are won, our Reason can hold out no longer.

When

When the *Doctrine drops like the rain*, as *Moses* says, and distills upon us, as the *gentle dew*, how naturally does it soften our Hearts, and bring forth good fruits of increase. But if it falls down in violent Storms, and hasty Showers, it does but overwhelm the field, and spoil a hopeful Harvest.

One word in season may have a good effect. But to multiply words, and that unseasonably too, is losing our labour, and betraying our design.

Admonish thy friend in private, says the Wise Man, *perhaps he has not done it*. But if we rashly launch out into high-flown open exclamations, insulting over their Follies, and upbraiding of their Faults, we do but proclaim the weakness of our own Passions, while we are inveighing against theirs; and shew that our design is not to reform Them, but only to please Our selves.

A very unnatural Pleasure sure. But where is the Piety of all this, that we should be at such pains to disparage our

Faith, and shew our Religion in such an ugly dress? Nay where is the Prudence of it, that we should take such care to expose our own frailty, and do our selves much harm, without hopes of doing them any kind of Good. For every Man turns away with scorn from a vain insolent Reprover, and thinks that Vice its self is more tolerable than such an arrogant assuming Vertue. Every Man will say, Thou Hypocrite, go home, and *pull the beam out of thy own eye, before thou pryest for motes in the eyes of other men.*

It must be confest that the World does stand in great need to be reform'd ; and yet we must needs perceive, that there are many Reformers in it of so low a rank in Vertue, that if *a'l that bear them were altogether, or but almost such as They,* the World would be never the better for the Reformation.

And now to conclude. What I have said is a Doctrine of universal use, especially in such a sinful, but withal such a Centurious Age as this : And I hope every one that hears me this Day, will be

be able to make a particular application of it to himself. And the application of all, indeed the sum of all, is this ; That since the World is so generally corrupted, and every Man's private sins add something to the great Mass of Corruption, therefore every private Man is bound, as much as in him lies, to contribute something to a general Cure : And that not only by restraining his own Vices, but also by promoting Vertue in other Men, and instilling good Principles into his Brethren ; by instructing those that want instruction, and correcting those that stand in need to be corrected.

But then, this work being very nice, we must be sure to do it with great accuracy of Judgment, and a very tender Hand : That we may not harden them by violent unseasonable reproofs, and imprudent unnecessary provocations, but reclaim them by a friendly Conversation, and an affectionate Concern ; forasmuch as there are many Men, who will easily be led into Vertue, but will be very hardly Driven.

But above all, we must be sure to give them a good Example, and shew an instance in our selves, of those Vertues which we recommend to others. For this is the most natural, most powerful argument that can be us'd, and seldom fails of success. Then we may *Teach, and Exhort*, with good effect, when we can say, like *St. Paul*, and that without vanity, *I would to God that all that hear me were such as I am.*

Nay then we may *rebuke also with good authority*, and our Rebukes will be taken in good part. *Let the righteous smite me and it shall be a kindness*, says the Psalmist, *let him Reprove me, and it shall be an excellent oyl that shall not break my head.*

Instead of Contesting and reviling, defending and proving against one another, could Men but once be brought to comply with this peaceable method, and follow this amiable example of the Apostle in my Text, we should quickly find more Piety in the Church, and more
 Quiet-

Quietness in the State, more Honour to
the name of God, and more safety to the
Souls of Men.

Which God of his great Mercy Grant.

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ROM. V. 7.

Scarcely for a Righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a Good man some would even dare to die.

OUR great Apostle speaking for himself in a formal Court of Justice, in answer to several Accusations that were brought against him, says no more than this, *Herein do I exercise my self to have always a Conscience void of offence.* And indeed there was nothing more need be said, for being summon'd as a Transgressor of the Law, his business only was to make a legal Vindication. When a Man is accus'd for being guilty of offences, 'tis enough to prove himself *void of offence.*

But

But tho' this is a sufficient Vindication, yet still 'tis no Commendation of a Man ; for where is the Vertue, where is the Praise of doing those things which are absolutely necessary to be done, and keeping our selves without the lash and censure of the Law. Surely this is below the Character of a Christian, much more of an Apostle : and therefore we cannot but admire the temper of *St. Paul*, who tho' he had so much to add in his own defence, yet his modesty chose to say no more.

We know his exercise was, not only to be inoffensive, but beneficial also towards Men. Not to confine himself within the narrow bounds of Righteousness, and strict Justice ; but his Charity enlarg'd his Soul, and made him launch forth into such generous expressions, and tender instances of love towards Mankind, for which he had no Command in the Word of God, and only the Son of God for his example.

If

If we consider the care which he had of all the Churches, and the trouble which he under-went in their concerns, how he spent himself for the good of their Souls, and was content to be accursed for their sakes ; We shall find his Character rise much higher, than giving no offence.

'Tis a low design to aim only at being safe, and to follow such things as are *just and true* ; but a Vertuous Ambition, a generous spirit will pursue things that are *lovely, and of good report* ; and like that famous Roman Emperor (who was therefore styl'd the delight of humane kind) will account every day as lost, which he has not signaliz'd by some eminent act of kindness.

'Tis this tenderness of disposition, this voluntary affectionate concern for the good of other Men, that makes a Man properly be called Good, and as such, to be beloved. And this shews us the reason of that difference which my Text puts between a Good and a Righteous Man. *For scarcely for a Righteous Man will one die, yet peradventure, for a Good man, some would*

would even dare to die. In my following discourse therefore I shall

1. Compare this *Goodness* and *Righteousness* together, and shew wherein they differ.

2. I shall shew the different effects and approbation, which these two qualities meet with in the World. And then,

3. I shall consider the obligations which lie upon us, to be not only *Righteous* but moreover *Good*.

And, 1. I am to set forth the nature of these two Qualities, *Righteousness* and *Goodness*, and the difference which is between them. Now *Righteousness*, in the proper signification of the Word, is a strict adhering to the Letter of the Law, and an exact observance of the Punctilio of our Duty, in all our transactions between Man and Man. Neither to injure their Bodies, nor endanger their Souls; neither to violate their Credit, nor diminish their Estate; but to allow every Man what is his own, or in one word, to give him no occasion of offence.

This

This is all that in strictness of Justice can be impos'd upon us, and all that is prescrib'd in the letter of the Law : that we should be equal and impartial in all our dealings, giving measure for measure, and weight for weight ; neither Condemning the Innocent, nor Acquitting the Guilty. Here, *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*, is the Word : And the Law, being a certain, general, determinate Rule, can go no farther, nor allow either more or less : 'tis a dead letter, that cannot take cognisance of those minute differences, which arise upon a closer examination of the fact, and do much alter the nature of the thing. It may shew us where the Justice lies, but as for the equity of the Cause, that must be left to the discretion of the Judge.

Where we must observe, that 'tis only the inward affection of the heart, that makes an action to be formally Good or Evil : But the Law takes hold only of the outward act, and therefore the Judgment which it makes, is often doubtful, and sometimes wrongful too ; and yet he that directs himself exactly by this Rule,
is

is commonly, and properly said; to be
a *Righteous man*.

'Twas this that gave occasion for that celebrated saying among the Heathens, *Summum jus summa injuria*. He that will be so very critically Just; must needs be very Injurious too. For 'tis impossible but that Men must offend, sometimes through ignorance, and sometimes through inadvertency, for which 'tis fit that some grains should be allow'd. Nay there is some allowance also to be made for humane infirmities, some abatements upon the account of flesh and blood; and therefore whosoever prosecutes all actions alike, and either censures, or punishes Men for those offences, which perhaps they could not foresee, or perhaps they could not prevent; that man may call himself *Righteous*, because he observes his Rule; but no man will call him *Good*, because his rule is ill apply'd.

Agreeable to this is *Solomon's* advice, *Be not Righteous overmuch, for there is a Just man that perishes in his Righteousness*. That is, a Man may strain a point of Justice too high, and lay too much stress upon it when he has done, and may think

think himself safe in doing so, and yet nothing is more apt to give a Man the fall, and deceive his expectations. For tho' Justice does go by weight and measure, yet since there is so much ignorance, and weakness, and partiality in the World, 'tis fit that something more than bare measure should be allow'd.

Therefore, says our Saviour, *Except your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* How! must we exceed the Righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees? Surely that's impossible. They were Righteous even to a Punctilio, and not one jot or tittle of the Law could scape them. *All these Commandments have I kept from my youth up,* said one of them, were many of them were ready to say the like: And yet our Saviour told him, that tho' he had done much, yet still he had much more to do. His *Righteousness* he did not except against; Nay, he approved it, and lov'd him for it: only he put some tests upon him, to try his *Goodness* by, and these did indeed so far exceed the *Righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees*, that this young hopeful Pharisee broke with
our

our Saviour upon those very terms. And now what this *Goodness* is, as it stands distinguish'd from *Righteousness*, is the next thing to be consider'd.

As in the civil Government of the World, we find it absolutely necessary that a Court of Equity should be set up; to abate the rigour of the Courts of Justice; so also in that Tribunal, which God has establish'd in our own hearts, for the tryal of all humane Actions at home, there must be some temper, some allay found out, to rectifie the proceedings and mollifie the Sentence, and to run through the whole course of our Judgment. That we may not be too severe in our Censures, nor too peremptory in our Decrees against other Men: And that we do not insist too much upon our Own Righteousness, nor entertain too favourable an Opinion of Our selves; but prove easie and yielding on either hand, abating something of our right, and allowing something unto theirs, that so we may meet upon the level, and converse upon even terms.

This

This is the very qualification which makes up the Character of the *Good Man* in my Text: And 'tis much the same with that which was call'd by the Philosophers [*δωδύα*] a yielding, complying, condescending Spirit: A softning quality, which they threw into the composition of all their Laws, and made the principal Ingredient in every Vertue.

'Tis that which our Language very happily expresses by Good Nature, and is very near akin to that temper upon which St. James fixes the Character of the true Religion; that is, *Peaceable, and Gentle, and easie to be intreated*: Not a tenacious insisting upon our own Right, nor positively adhering to our own Determinations; but a readiness to close in with our Brethren upon any reasonable terms, and to wear off all Stiffness and Singularity of mind: To comply with the bent of Their inclinations, where we cannot bend them to our own; and be more solicitous to please them, than our selves.

For he that is a good Man, must needs be a Wise Man too: And consequently, has a greater command over himself,
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than he can pretend to over other Men: He knows how to abate something of his own Humour, and quit something of his own Right, and yet live easily, and contentedly still: And therefore he is always ready to do good with what he has, and to communicate it unto those that want: for with such Sacrifices he knows that God is pleas'd, as well as he, and he is as well pleas'd, as the very person whom he relieves. In a word, a Good Man is to be known by the Good he does, and by the Pleasure which he takes in doing so.

∴ And now having considered the Nature of Righteousness, and Goodness as they stand a part; let us compare them both together, and we shall quickly see which of them has the Preheminence. And to clear up this Comparison, there cannot be a more pertinent, proper Instance, than that which is recorded of *Joseph* in the 1. Chap. of *St. Matth.* Who when his espoused Wife was found with Child, He being a *just Man*, could do no less than put her away; but being a *Good Man* also, he would not execute the rigour of the Law upon her, but resolv'd to put her away with all the privacy and decency that he could. In

In this Instance we see as it were the dawnings of Christianity, and how the Righteousness of the Law, began to give way to the Goodness of the Gospel: It was this that shew'd *Joseph* to be a Good Man indeed, and fit to be the reputed Father of our Lord: And upon this very Principle it was that our Saviour afterwards founded his Religion. And accordingly we may observe, that the greatest part of his Sermon upon the Mount, that perfect Summary of the Gospel, is taken up in mollifying his Disciples hearts, and mitigating their rigour of all those Precepts, which they had heard said of old.

And therefore in the Comparison between *Righteousness* and *Goodness*, the first remarkable difference that arises from it, is, that Righteousness is the proper tenour of the Law: but Goodness is the true property of the Gospel. Our legal Righteousness can give us no better a Title than that of *unprofitable servants*; but Goodness, which is an Evangelical Vertue, does indeed recommend us to the love of God, and gives us the Honour to be call'd his Sons: 'Tis the

very Image of God within us, that Perfection in Our Nature, whereby we resemble His. *Be ye merciful, says Christ, as your father in heaven is merciful :* Or as he expresseth it in another place, *Be ye perfect, as your father also is perfect.*

2. Another difference is, that Righteousness proceeds from the more ignoble Principle of the two : And to prove this, we must observe, that all other Laws, as well as those against Adultery, were made by reason of *the hardness of Mens hearts,* and partly in compliance with that stubborn humour : And therefore their great care is, to secure us from all those outrages and insults, which they suppose us to be in danger of : Our Properties they fence, by the penalty of restoring fourfold; and guard our Persons, by the penance of an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth : And therefore, the Law being ratified and confirm'd by Fear, a legal Righteousness is at best but a servile thing.

But now the Gospel proceeds upon a quite different Principle : 'Tis grounded upon Love; and supposes, not a hardness of Heart, but a tenderness of Constitution in us, and therefore is so far from indul-

indulging us in any jealous, suspicious, revengeful spirit, that instead of securing us, it lays us open to affronts, and allows us no other method of returning them, but by being patient ; nor of preventing them, but by being kind.

'Twas thus that the Primitive Christians recommended themselves, and their Religion to the World: Namely, by a universal Love, an Inoffensive Spirit, a Generous Resolution, neither to give, nor to take offence: But *to bear all things, and to believe all things, and to have all things in common*, were then the characteristick notes of a Good Disciple. Thus *righteousness* permits us to resist the evil; but *Goodness* teaches us to overcome the Evil with Good.

3. The next difference between them appears, in the different ends which they are directed to. Now the great End which a *Good Man* proposes to himself, is doing Good: But a *Righteous Man's* end is only to do no hurt. For we may observe, that all the Commandments which concern our behaviour towards our equals, are only negative. *Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit Adultery,*

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Thou shalt not Steal, &c. and whosoever keeps himself within these bounds, may properly be call'd a *righteous man*.

But where is the commendation of all this? What mighty matter is it for us to do no hurt, or how does this Character answer the ends of our Creation? If this is all, we had as good never have been born, for then also we should have done no hurt, and have had no thanks for it neither. But God sent us into the World for nobler Purposes, and put nobler Principles within us: He made Man a Sociable good natur'd Creature, and God be thanked, he has given us Abilities, and Inclinations too, to help one another. Nay, God be thanked, he has given us Infirmities also, which make us stand in need of one anothers help, and the greatest Beauty of the Creation consists in the harmonious Will, and friendly consent of Men, and that mutual dependence which is amongst us.

Now it is not bare *Righteousness*, but *Goodness* that holds Mens affections close together, and keeps the World in tune: without which, tho we should suppose all mankind to be exactly righteous, we might

might find some safety, perhaps, but should have no comfort in the world: we might be secure from Violence, but still we should have no fence against Mis-chance. No Man would throw us into a Pit, and no Man would be at the pains to take us out. For if we resolve to do no more than what the Law imposes on us, we can't expect that any one should strain a point of Courtesie in our behalf, but if we do fall into the Pit, there we may *perish in our righteousness*, as Solomon says, or as my Text well observes, *For a righteous man one would scarcely venture to die: which brings me to the*

2. Thing propos'd: Namely, the different Approbation, and Applause, which these two qualities meet with in the World; the different acceptance which they find with Men: *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die.* The words we see are very cautiously express'd, and tenderly deliver'd; for Life is very Sweet, and Death is a great Tryal, and that Man must be very Good himself, who would dare to die for such another. And yet there is such a Power, such a Charm in Goodness, that it works

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it self strongly into our Affections, and imprints its self deeply into our Hearts, and is able to subdue the two most violent inclinations of our nature, the love of Life, and the fear of Death it self; and *for a good man some would even dare to die.*

And why not for a Righteous Man as well? Why truly for a very natural reason, because the Righteous Man would not die for me; his care extends no farther than Himself, all his concern is only and barely to do his duty, and as for any thing beyond that, 'tis all supererogation Work, which he perfectly despises. Therefore he ties up himself to some stiff, formal Rules of Life, and will not be beaten out of his common road, by any temptation of doing an unnecessary good, and so makes himself as unprofitable a Friend, as he is a Servant.

Indeed, goodness is the only excellence in Man, that deserves to be belov'd or priz'd. Good nature is all that a Man is good for in the World; without which, his riches only make him insolent, and his knowledge will but make him vain, and all his other admired qualities, render him the more dangerous, and suspected,

ed, and unfit for humane conversation. Nay, without this Goodness, and benignity of Mind, Righteousness is nothing else but Interest, and Vertue nothing but design, and Religion it self will dwindle either into frowardness, or formality.

What could be a more disagreeable, ungrateful sight, than to see a Pharisee strutting in his Righteousness, and full of himself, *and thanking God that he is not like other Men*, when no wise Man would be like Him, if he could; and yet a rigorous Religion will certainly bring a Man to this, and always puff him up, if he has not a great proportion of humility and goodness to keep him down; it will make him apt, first to censure, and then despise, and at last to revile his Brethren, for not being as Religious as himself; *And yet, says the Apostle, No man is of a more vain insignificant Religion, than he that is of such an unbridled Tongue.*

For a Man to be always boasting of his own Conscience, and despising of other Mens, is a certain sign that he does not understand where the point of Conscience lies. He may be a Righteous Man perhaps, but Righteousness, we see,

see, is not a thing worth boasting of ; but as for Goodness, a vain-glorious Man can make no pretences to it, unless we account it a good thing to despise all that seem worse, and envy all that are better than our selves.

'Tis a most admirable saying of our Saviour's, that *There is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety nine righteous persons, that need no repentance.* If there were really ninety nine such persons to be found, yet the saying would be true, and hold good upon Earth also, as well as in Heaven, and one humble, penitent, returning Sinner would be worth them all : More agreeable in his Life, and more useful in his Conversation : Better fitted to promote the Benefit of the Church, the Glory of God, and the Joy of Men.

For the sense of his own Weakness makes him Humble, and Meek, and Compassionate towards others : and the Discipline of Repentance, which he has run through, brings him to a true tenderness of Spirit, and a broken Heart : it teaches him to be respectful, and kind, and to set a greater value upon other Men

Men, and a lets upon himself; makes him ready, and willing to labour for their good, because God has been good to him; and to forgive them, because he himself has been forgiven.

It leaves no Gall upon his Spirits, no Sowerness, nor Hardness upon his Heart: But makes him Affable, and Mild, and condescending in his Temper, Charitable, and open, and benign in his Conversation: That is, in one word, it makes him a Good Man, and absolutely fitted for all the uses of humane Life. 'Tis this that endears him to the hearts of Men, and recommends him to their Affections, and makes them also solicitous and concern'd, how to make him a due return for his good will, and repay him Love for Love.

It gives all Men an interest in his safety, makes many men desirous to prolong his life, though it be with the hazard of their own: And some men *would even dare to die for him.*

And now having seen what the nature of Goodness is, and how it recommends us to the Friendship and Esteem
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of Men, one would think that all the considering part of mankind might easily see the obligations which lie upon them, to practice this most excellent Vertue, and the necessity of their being not only *Righteous*, but *Good*. Which was the

3d. Thing to be consider'd. A consideration that is always useful, and I am sorry to say, that it is too seasonable in this our age, wherein the hardness of Mens hearts has thrown us back again, from a Kind, Generous, Christian Community, to a Narrow, Selfish, Slavish State. Like the *Jews* themselves, we are become Jealous and Revengeful, and exact the rigour of Justice upon one another, *With an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*. Nay, like *Jews* and *Samaritans*, we are grown untractable in our Conversation, implacable in our Resentments, *And will have no dealing with one another*.

And yet Religion was never strain'd to a higher pitch than now, that is, it never made a louder noise. Now we have *Godly Men* in abundance, and *Righteous Men* also, good store; at least if their

their words may be taken for it : But as for *Good Men*, they are sometimes talkt of, but very seldom seen. 'Tis a thing which few pretend to now a-days, and they who are the greatest pretenders to the name, are commonly the greatest strangers to the thing.

We are all too intent upon our own advantage, and studious to promote it all we can, and confine all our endeavours, either to our selves, or to some ill contriv'd party at most ; which (to our shame be it spoken) we account Our selves ; but as for the common good, or the advantage of other Men, 'tis a Foreign remote concern, and we seldom trouble our heads about it.

Tho' we pretend sometimes to Love our Neighbours, yet our Enemies we hate, and profess it too : At least our Actions profess as much. Nay so far are we from endeavouring, like good Christians, *To overcome Evil with Good*, that we can hardly be persuaded to repay one good turn with another : And yet even the *Gentiles* do so.

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This is indeed the crying sin of our times, and a sin of very fatal consequence: And if it is not speedily reclaim'd, besides many other ruinous effects, it will make all our Religion ineffectual, and neither our Righteousness nor Godliness will be accepted. 'Tis nothing but Goodness that recommends them both: This is that *salt of the earth*, that seasons our Religion with a grateful relish, and preserves it also from Corruption: This is that quality which our Saviour came down from Heaven to instruct us in, and which he still sends the holy Spirit to infuse into us: The Gentleness of the Lamb, and the Meekness of the Dove, are the great Characters which the Gospel sets before us: And by the improvements which we have made in these qualities, our Saviour will Judge us at the last day.

Then the question will be, not so much how punctually we have walk'd in the ways of Justice, and made the World admire us for Righteous Men: But what acts of Mercy, and Kindness we have perform'd: What Enemies we have forgiven, and what Friends we have reliev'd:

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What poor Christians we have visited in their sickness, or suppli'd in their wants : That is, not how *Righteous*, but how *Good* we are. This will be the great Question at the last Day; and yet in these Days, the thing is so much neglected, that I fear many reputed Righteous Men, will then be at a great loss how to answer it.

To say that *we have kept all the Commandments from our youth up* : And in all those Commandments, where could we find one word of cloathing the Naked, and visiting the Sick ? What Precept obliging us to diminish our own Fortunes, or endanger our own Healths, in looking after others ? Is no answer to our Saviours question, but turning the question impertinently upon Him.

Nay tho we could say, and say truly too, that we have liv'd Godly, and Sober, as well as Righteous Lives : That we have constantly attended the Service of God, and observ'd the Rules of Justice, and never broke in upon the Laws of Temperance and Sobriety all our days; yet all this is as little to the purpose, when God comes to inquire, not what necessary duties we have omitted, but what

what kind and charitable Offices we have done. There lies the main point of Judgment, there lies the sole merit of our cause; and when we speak to that, we do indeed speak to the purpose, and shall be sure to be favourably heard.

These are the endowments that must qualifie us for a place in Heaven. There is nothing but Meekness, and Peace, and Joy, and Charity, to be seen in the Regions above: And if we ever hope to go thither, it is by the exercise of these Vertues that we must make our way; we must acquaint our Souls, during this time of our Probation here, with such excellencies as may fit them to appear amongst those glorious spirits hereafter.

'Tis very often, and very truly said, that if an unclean Man should be admitted into Heaven, with all his foul affections and lusts about him, he would soon grow weary of the place, and meer shame would make him desirous to retire. And I doubt not but our passions also would make us do the like: That Envy, and Hatred, and Malice, and Ambition, would

would look as much out of countenance in that place, as Uncleanness, and Lust it self.

And then how destitute is their condition like to prove, who have nothing else to recommend them unto God, but only a furious Zeal for his Service, and that perhaps in a mistaken Cause: However, by this Zeal they suffer themselves to be transported to such Heats and Passions, such Anger and Revenge, as exceed all bounds of Reason, and disparage that very Religion which they espouse: For want of *goodness*, they do the Cause of God more harm, than all their *righteousness* will ever be able to do it Good.

And how do these Men expect to be rewarded for such an intemperate, uncharitable, unseasonable Zeal, as destroys all their Love, and fills them so full of *righteousness*, that they have no room for *Goodness* left? *Come ye blessed of my Father, for I was naked, and ye cloath'd me: hungry, and ye fed me: a stranger, and ye took me in* — all this will be but an uncomfortable hearing to those who contracted all their Love always to a Party, and never shew'd Mercy or Pity to a Stranger

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all their lives, but call a Man Reprobate first, and then starve him for it; and so prove guilty of a double uncharitableness, first to his Soul, and then to his Body.

This pestilent humour, this pernicious practice, though it is very common in our days, yet I will positively say, that it is the direct contradiction of Christianity, the aversion of our Blessed Saviour, for which he must needs abhor us Here, and will certainly condemn us hereafter.

• This is the first, and great Obligation which lies upon us to be Good, and to shew it in acts of Charity and Kindness: Namely, a due regard to God's Judgments. But because *the judgments of God are so far out of sight* (as the Psalmist says) that for this reason a wicked Man *desires all his Enemies*; therefore I shall mention one Obligation more, which is intimated in my Text, and that is, the impression which our goodness makes upon our *Friend*. For a good man some would even dare to die: By which we see, that a Man's Goodness may preserve him from Death also, as well as from Judgment; and is the only solid foundation of friendship in the World.

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This may seem perhaps to be but a slight Remark, and no material Consideration: That friendship in it self is a thing indifferent, to which we are not oblig'd; and by accident it may prove troublesome, as well as useful to us: And if this is the great advantage of Goodness, that it creates us Friends, we may as well, nay perhaps, better live without it: If our *Righteousness* cannot protect us, yet the *Mammon of unrighteousness* can; and by that Wisdom which is inherent in the Children of this World, we shall preserve our selves in our Generation.

This does indeed seem to be the Sense of this our Age: And that's one great reason, why there is so little, either of Goodness or of Friendship to be found. And yet if one of these projecting Men, who love their Friends so little, and themselves so much, should come within the supposition of my Text, and be brought in such danger of Death, as to stand in need of a Friends assistance; then, I doubt not but they would wish, that instead of all their Righteousness, and all their Mammon too, they

they were but Masters of so much Goodness, as should purchase such a Friend.

• • But a true Friend is not so quickly purchas'd : He is indeed an invaluable Treasure, and there must go much labour, and much time, and many costly ingredients besides, to make him up : A clean Conscience, and an untainted Honour ; a try'd Goodness, and a well exercis'd Religion : And when a Man has got a due proportion [*a Quantum sufficit*] of these, then is he fit, either to make, or to have a Friend : Then would he *even dare to die for a good man*, and a Good Man would *die for him*.

† And yet if we consider the temper of this Age, and should take the measures of Men's Goodness, by the steadyness of their Friendships ; upon this issue we should find but a very bad account. How fickle and changeable are the generality of mankind in their Affections ; after all the Pledges of Friendship and Confidence have pass'd between Men, yet how usual is it to see them, sometimes forsake, and sometimes betray their Friend ? One for his Interest, another for his Humour, nay, another for a Jest, shall under-

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mine his Confident, and renounce the most venerable obligations that can pass between Man and Man.: And yet we think these matters don't concern our Religion, and therefore we do not charge them to the account of our Sins.

But if breaking of Friendship be not a breach of any positive Law; if we may do it with a salvo to our *Righteousness*; yet such a Man must never pretend to *Goodness* more. And to prove this, we need only bring him to the standard in my Text, which is the proper Test of a Good Man; and we shall find, that, without all peradventure, *no man would dare to die for Him*. No Man would make such dangerous essays to oblige one, who upon every turn is so ready to cancel the Obligation.

How Friendship comes to be so much out of repute of late, is a very melancholy consideration; and would make one suspect, that not only Christianity, but humanity also is degenerated very much amongst us. Friendship, with the Heathens, was accounted the highest pitch of Vertue: And 'tis the greatest sign of Vertue still: 'Tis the greatest

Perfection of our state upon Earth, and comes nearest to the state of Heaven: 'Tis the natural result of Goodness, and Goodness is the only Excellence in Man: 'Tis all that is commendable, and all that is desirable in our nature. In a word, a Good Man is the only person whom one would zealously wish to live, and the only person *for whom one would dare to die.*

I doubt not but in these words, the Apostle had a particular eye upon the person of our Blessed Saviour: Who was the best Man, the kindest Master, and the truest Friend, that ever liv'd. He did *die for us*, and what Good Man *would not die for him*? And yet so Kind, so Good is he unto us, that he does not require this severe testimony of our Love: Only in return for all the Good he has done for Us, he commands us to do Good to one another. God grant that we may do so, to good effect: To the honour of our Blessed Master, the benefit of his Church, and the Salvation of our own Souls.

2 KINGS

2 KINGS V. 1.

Now Naaman Captain of the host of the King of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, b.cause by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria; he was also a mighty man of valour, but he was a Leper.

THE History of *Naaman* the Syrian affords us great plenty of profitable Speculations and curious Remarks, which may serve for our instruction in all the several circumstances of our Fortune, all the dispensations of Humane Life. My Text represents him to us under a double aspect; the first whereof may be apt to raise our envy, but the second makes him an Object of our Pity and Commiseration.

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If we take him in the ascendant of his Honours and Preferments, what Man could make a greater figure? He was, in his Person, *a Mighty Man of Valour*, which is one of the highest Gifts of Nature; and this advanc'd him to be *Captain of the Host*, which is a place of the highest Trust; in the discharge of which Trust he so behav'd himself, as to become *Great* in the favour of his Prince, and *Honourable* in the eye of the People; and as an accomplishment to all the rest, he was, tho a Heathen, yet a Favourite of that God whom he did not worship: *For by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria*: All that could speak a Man Great and Happy, we read in the Character of this Mighty *Naaman*.

But he was a Leper, a nauseous afflicting disease had seiz'd upon his flesh, which was such an abatement of his Spirit, such a diminution of his Happiness, as all his Masters favour could not recompence, and all his Host could not drive away: 'Twas such a perplexing, prevailing evil, as in spite of all his Honours and Preferments, must needs render him unserviceable in the field, unwelcome in the

the Court, and uneasie even to himself. So fallacious a thing is this world, so vain a thing is it for a Man to build his Happiness upon the Goods of Fortune, that after he has obtain'd his hearts desire, one unfortunate unexpected accident turns the Wheel, and makes him miserable; if any one of ten thousand conveniencies is but wanting, 'tis enough to spoil the enjoyment of all the rest.

And yet, to see how falsely we argue from these outward circumstances, how deceitful a Judgment we make of our own Affairs! those very misfortunes, which we bewail, prove oftentimes the occasions of our greatest Happiness.

Had *Naaman* enjoy'd his Health, as well as Plenty, and had nothing to exercise his thoughts upon, but his Victories and Success, the Triumphs of the field and the Pleasures of the Court, he might have liv'd, and died perhaps, a favourite to his Master, but a stranger to his God: 'Twas nothing but his Disease that cur'd his Idolatry, and rescu'd him out of the House of *Rimmon*, and recover'd him from a dangerous senseless Religion: If *Naaman* had not been a Leper, he never had been clean. All

All these things are written for our instruction: And therefore that they may suggest such thoughts unto us as shall be for our advantage, let us look upon this Mighty Man in the three remarkable turns, and Crises of his Life.

1. In the height of his Prosperity.
2. In the state of his Distemper. And,
3. In the method of his Cure.

In all which we shall find something that may be useful for Us also, and applicable to our own Condition, whatever our Circumstances are.

And, 1. In the height of his Prosperity, we find the Holy Scripture has given him a very advantageous character, and recorded his name with such Glorious Titles, as if God himself had been pleas'd with his Achievements, and approv'd his Conduct, even while he was a Heathen: A Great and a Successful Commander, an Honourable and a Mighty Man, and all this from the Testimony of the Holy Ghost, is enough to recommend Greatness to the most

mortifi'd Hermite, and make a Vertue of Ambition.

There are indeed Men of such envious turbulent Spirits, that they make it their perpetual business, to Libel the Great, and level all that are above them; as if Honour were a dangerous useles thing, and nothing could grow upon such lofty Ground, but what is fit to be rooted up: My Text gives us a very different account, and has drawn the Picture of this Great Man, with such excellent Features, as we cannot chuse but Admire and Love.

Now not to insist upon *Naaman's* Valour, or Promotion, which do not properly lie within the Sphere of my Discourse, one of them being owing to his Nature, and the other to his Prince; yet two Eminent Qualities we find in his Character, which must needs recommend him to our esteem, and to our imitation. As,

1. That he was Honourable in himself; And,

2. That

2. That he was useful to his Country.

And, 1. *He was a great man with his Master, and honourable*: From whence we may observe, that to be Honourable, is something more than to be Great: And therefore, that I may not seem to press a Duty out of Season, or out of place, we must know that Honour, according to the Notion in my Text, is not an excellency that belongs to any particular Degree, or Station, or Condition of Life, but lies open, and common to all mankind.

It does indeed denote Quality, but it is a Quality of the Mind, such as every Man must aim at, and any Man may reach: 'Tis such a fix'd and steady principle within ones self, as does not depend upon any outward accidental advantages, but is grounded upon Truth, and establish'd by Vertue, and rather shews Goodness than Greatness in a Man: At least it shews a Man who scorns to owe his Greatness to any indirect Sordid Means, or to employ it to any unlawful unworthy End: For that is not Exalting, but Expoling of the Man, and making him

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Eminent only to his own Shame: That is not a Character fit for the Word of God to recommend.

To think that all means are Lawful which tend to our advancement, and according to the corrupt practice of our Age, to have an impatient desire of growing Great, without any regard to being Honest, is the greatest argument of an impotent Spirit, a narrow Soul. He only is the truly generous Man, who is above the temptation of Power and Wealth, when they are not consistent with his Religion, and makes his Fortune and Integrity go hand in hand; who thinks nothing can be for his Advancement, that is not also for his Commendation: And disclaims all such Possessions as cannot be held without reluctance of Conscience, and reflecting Disgrace upon their Owners.

But now, he that *makes hast to grow rich*, can have none of these regards, either to his Honour, or his Safety: His very speed will pervert his judgment, and dazle his eyes, and make him overlook those bounds of Justice, which God and Nature have laid before him.

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And in this case, his Estate is commonly as hasty as himself, *makes it self wings, and flies away*, and leaves nothing but an afflicting sting behind it. 'Tis only the moderate undesigning Man, that turns his Riches into a lasting Inheritance, and makes that Inheritance to be a Blessing: who looks upon his Gold with an indifference of mind, and is not dazled with its lustre, but accounts it so far good, as it is well gotten and well employ'd.

Upon these terms, Prosperity is not only a Lawful, but a commendable State, and such a State, as is commended in my Text, for *Honourable*, by the Holy Ghost: 'Tis the Blessing of God upon our Endeavours, and the natural reward of Industry; 'tis what a good Man may desire with Moderation, and reflect upon with Comfort. To see all things prosper which he takes in hand, and the hand of God seconding all his Labours, must needs inspire him with Gratitude, and Devotion, towards the Giver of his good Gifts, and make him rejoice more in his Favour, than that *his Corn and Wine and Oil increase*. It gives him a generous commanding Spirit, a Superiority over those very Blessings which he enjoys, & teaches him

him the true original use of the Creatures, as God design'd them, to be servants unto Us, and not Us slaves to them.

This is that Greatness of Spirit, that Largeness of Soul, which God expects from them to whom he has given large Possessions: 'Tis that which stamps the Character of Honour upon a Rich Man, and makes his Power to be a true Image of his Maker.

'Tis true that Poverty also has its peculiar Vertues, and 'tis no small Honour to be above the frowns of Fortune; but 'tis much greater, because 'tis harder, to be above its smiles, and to bear up our Vertue against the allurements of Ease and Pleasure.

Adversity awakens our resolutions, and puts us upon our defence, and he that resists, may easily overcome; but Prosperity comes with Subtilty and Artifice upon us, by flatteries it undermines our Vertue, betrays us into a confidence, and soothes us gently into our ruin; with such insinuating deceitful caresses does it work its self into our affections, and
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circumvent our Reason, that nothing but an excellent Spirit can find out the cheat, and he had need be *a mighty man in valour*, that can resist the Charm.

2. The second commendable quality which we read in the Character of *Naaman* is, that he employ'd his Might in the defence of his Country, and promoting the Publick Good: and from hence we may learn, how we also must employ those abilities which God entrusts us with.

Some perhaps may think, that this also is a needless Exhortation in this place, and pressing a point which belongs only to Men of great Renown, and that nothing less than *the Captain of the Host* is concern'd in a Discourse about the deliverance of his Country.

But 'tis a dangerous and ridiculous mistake, and we should quickly find so to our cost, if this opinion should prevail: For doubtless every Man, as far as he is able, so far he is oblig'd to be assistant in this work, and no Man is so inconsiderable in a Commonwealth, but he may still contribute something to its pre-

preservation ; either by reconciling of its differences, or forewarning of its dangers ; either by promoting, advising, or at least by praying for its peace ; and *A poor Man*, as *Solomon* says, *may save a City*, as well as *a mighty Man in Valour*.

Others may think, that defending of their Country is indeed their interest; but not their duty, a thing that concerns them in Policy rather than Religion. But who can think that the Holy Ghost should give so honourable a Character of *Naaman*, only for prosecuting of his own interest, or that his Worldly Policy should be a motive with God to bring him to his Conversion?

No doubt but God himself being more solicitous for the publick good, than for any private Mans advantage, he expects that we should be so too ; that we should have a principal regard to the welfare of our Country, a generous Compassion for the sufferings of our brethren, and a common concern for the good of all Mankind ; and not think that we were born only to please our selves, or that our whole Estate was bestow'd upon us to be spent upon our own single entertainment.

'Tis a small thing to preserve our own lives, and a little labour would suffice to satisfy the necessities of Nature, and we do not therefore admire and honour the rich, because he himself *fares sumptuously every day*; but because he feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked, supports the weak, protects the innocent, and encourages the industrious; that he lifts them up with his hand, defends them with a stretch'd out arm, and supplies the place of God himself in undertaking the protection of his Creatures. This is truly honourable, and all that is honourable in Man.

It is indeed a commendable thing for a Man to make provision for his own House; and have a regard for Posterity; but he that thinks to secure his private interest, by neglecting of the publick, begins at the wrong end of his work, and builds his House without laying his Foundation; and for the most part his building fares accordingly. For tho' a Man should be so perversly Politick, so preposterously Wise, as to pursue only his private ends in times of danger, and leave the publick burdens to those

those who are more publick spirited and honourable than himself, yet commonly some Judgment overtakes him, either in his Body, or his Estate, and God returns his Wickedneis upon his own head.

Thus it fared with the churlish *Nabal*, for refusing to entertain the Servants of *David*, when he was fighting the Battles of the Lord, 1 Sam. 25, 28. And thus it fared with *Gebazi* in my Text, for being so eager upon *Naaman's* presents, when his own Country was in danger: *Is this a time*, saith the Prophet, *to receive money, and garments, and sheep, and oxen? the Leprosie of Naaman cleave unto thee for ever.* A proper reward for a Coveting, Itching, Scraping Man. And I fear there are, at this time, those who thro' their selfish unseasonable designs, deserve *Gebazi's* censure, tho' they have the fortune to escape his disease. But what Character is black enough to describe their guilt? what Disease is foul enough for their Punishment, who not only make their advantage of publick Calamities, when they come, but purposely disturb the publick Peace them-

selves, that they may rake for Wealth in the ruins of their Country?

And to what purpose is all this pains? In all Ages and Places of the World, we read of publick Monuments and Statues erected for the Honour, and publick provision made for the Maintenance, of those who have exercis'd themselves for the publick good; but as for them whose ambition reach'd no higher than the raising of their fortunes, and leaving behind them a great Estate, we find only some slight remembrance left, and that seldom without reproach.

What can be more despicable than the memory of *Gehazi*, that little Jew, who thought of nothing but to make a Trade of his Religion? What can be said more honourable of a Man, than what is here recorded of *Naaman* the Syrian, that *by him God had given deliverance unto his Country*? 'Tis a Glorious thing to be the instrument of God, that we should work by his appointment, and he should work by our hands; but 'tis more glorious still to be his instrument for Good, that thro' our hands he should derive blessings to his Creatures.

tures. But to defend our Country, to be the occasion of Peace and Happiness to the Nation where we live, has something more of Divinity in its nature; 'tis resembling God himself in his most Glorious Attribute, and seconding him in the Noblest exercise of his Dominion.

These are the steps whereby *Naaman* advanced himself, and became both *Great*, and *Honourable*, and has set us a pattern for our Imitation.

Let us now, in the second place, consider him in his affliction, and see what useful observations we may raise unto our selves from the state of his Distemper. *He was a mighty Man, but he was a Leper*; and then what good could all his Might and Greatness do him? What relief could he expect from his great Honours and Preferments, or with what satisfaction could he reflect upon his Victories and Success, when his Body was tormented, and his Soul perplex'd, with a nauseous Disease; and he was forc'd to leave that Country, which he had so well defended, and to go to a foreign, a hatefull Nation for a cure.

There is nothing nearer to a Man than his own Skin, nothing is naturally dearer to him than his Flesh, and all the Prosperity and Pleasure of the World can neither remove, nor recompence an evil that cleaves so close unto him: *Touch but his Bone and his Flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.* And it was well guessed of the Devil tho' it was not true; for tho' *Job* did bear up with great presence of mind, against all the ravages that were made upon his Family and Estate, yet when the malice of the Devil fix'd upon his Body, and touched him to the quick, then his great Spirit began to sink; and tho' he did not curse God himself, yet his Wife wondred how he could forbear.

And then how vexatious, how irksome must it be for a Man, like *Naa-man*, in the height of all his Poms and Solemnities, to carry these Thorns and Briars in his Skin, which the weight of his stately Robes about him will but drive deeper into his Flesh, and nearer to his Heart. And yet these are commonly the effects of Plenty, and Prosperity, and a flourishing Estate; sometimes

times it is the Natural, and sometimes the Moral cause of our Distempers ; sometimes our ease and fullness, in its ordinary course, breaks out in a noisome sore, *And our trouble springs out of the ground* that feeds us ; and sometimes our Extravagance brings a Judgment upon us for our rebuke, and our affliction comes down from Heaven. One Man God corrects for the reclaiming of his Folly, and another for the punishing of his Vice ; and no Man enjoys so perfect Serenity, so calm a Life, but he often finds a Cloud hanging over him, and all his Gaiety over-cast.

Such is the nature of all Worldly Greatness, such is the inconstancy of Humane Life : 'Tis so clog'd with inconveniences, so subject to malicious chance, that it yields nothing of moment or certainty, for us to depend upon, but when we are arrived to the heighth of our Expectation, we find some unexpected accident that dashes all our hopes, some one unlucky Drop that bitters all our Cup, and takes off the relish of our Enjoyments.

There is nothing perfect upon Earth, but a mixture of good and evil runs through the whole composition of our Life, and if we weigh the one against the other, all conditions of Life will seem indifferent, and the Slave that waits at the door of the Tent, is as happy a Man sometimes, as the Captain of *all the Host.*

The higher our Station is, the more we are expos'd to storms, and the more we have us'd our selves to Pleasure, the less are we able to bear the Pain. And tho' an Ambitious Unexperienc'd Man may think there is no Happiness like being Great, and to a Great Man no Happiness can be wanting, yet when he comes to try the Experiment, he commonly finds himself disappointed, and is sorry for the change. Whilst *David* was a private Man, and employ'd himself in feeding of the Sheep, how Easie, and Happy, and Melodious was his Life? But when he was called to feed the People, his charge and his danger encreas'd both together, and all his troubles bore date from his first coming to the Court.

Nay

Nay tho' a Man's Success should be answerable to his most Ambitious Hopes, and he should obtain the fullness of his Hearts Desire, yet some unaccountable vexation may fall upon his Soul, some vexatious Distemper may afflict his Body, or some insuperable burden be annex'd to his Estate, that shall effectually deject him in the height of his advancement, and make him lament himself, when all the World besides is either congratulating his Happiness, or envying his Success.

So false a Judgment are we apt to make, when we look upon the outward appearances of things. And now who would be fond of such a Station, that is so much expos'd to change and chance? We labour and moil our selves in getting the Riches of this World, which when we have got them, we are not sure to keep; or if we were, yet God knows they are not worth the keeping. They do but lead us into inconveniences, and there they leave us; and all the Riches in the World can only cause a Leprosie, but can never cure it.

A lit.

A little more Pleasure, or a little more Wealth, is that which fills all our heads, and imployes all our hands ; and yet if instead of a little more, we had but a little less, perhaps it might be much better for us. We pray for Prosperity and Honour, but like the Sons of *Zebedee*, *We pray for we know not what* : There may be a bitter Cup go along with our advancement, a Leprosie may be entail'd upon our Estate, that will quickly make us repent our wish, and desirous to exchange again. Ten Talents of Gold, and many good things besides, would *Naaman* have given for his Cure : And who would labour all his Life, to get a Fortune, and a Disease, and then be glad to resign up one, in hopes to Cure the other.

At the best, Prosperity when it comes most easily, and disengaged, is but like a troublesome stately Guest, it brings such a train of Cares and Distractions with it, that it spoils the honour of the Visit, and takes off the pleasure of the Entertainment. Thus a great Estate has so many encumbrances upon it, as eat out all its profit : And were a Wiseman
fel

left to follow his own inclinations, who would not chuse a Competent Retirement, a Comfortable and Safe Retreat, where he may enjoy his Health, his Pleasure, his God, and Himself, and live free from the noise, the trouble, and the dangers which wait upon the busie, *the mighty Man*.

Were we not obliged sometimes to sacrifice our own satisfaction to the publick good, who would not sit down under *his own Vine, and his own Fig-tree*, with a quiet contented mind, rather than hunt after uncertain Triumphs in the Field, and be *Captain of a whole Syrian Host*, or in any publick Station whatsoever, be bound to stand the brunt, of the Malice of his Enemies, and the Envy of his pretended Friends.

Thus the most flourishing condition of Life has its inconvenience; and from hence the mighty Man may learn to be humble, and the humble not to repine; and as they say, every poyson carries with it its own Antidote, so the consideration of *Naaman's Leprosie*, is the best cure against envying *Naaman's state*.

3. But

3. But lastly, if we consider his Cure, we shall have as little reason to pity his Disease. A Leprosie indeed must needs be an unwelcome guest to a Man of action, and a Man of State, such as the Great and Honourable *Naaman* was; but yet it was this Leprosie to which he ow'd his Health, 'twas nothing but the anguish of his Body that sav'd his Soul. Such a secret over-ruling Providence attends a Vertuous Honourable Man, that God raises Comfort out of his Affliction, and disappoints him into Happiness.

As for us, if the course of our life does not run smooth, and move as we would have it, we presently repine, and think our selves undone; and tho our designs are very shallow, yet every crossing of our design we look upon as an irrecoverable defeat: And when our own Judgment is at a stand, we give up our Cause for lost. An easie Fortune and a pleasant Life, we commonly account an argument of God's kindness to us, and think those are the greatest favourites of Heaven, who enjoy the quietest Portion upon Earth. But so deceitful is our Judgment, That the very contrary of this is true, and

and they only are God's beloved Children whom he corrects : For Vertue thrives best under a heavy hand ; without which, the rankest weeds grow always in the richest Soil, it was the Wilderness that reform'd, but *Canaan* that corrupted *Israel*.

If Ease and Plenty could secure our eternal happiness, we would labour for Plenty, and pray for Ease : but if we find that they only betray us into ruine, if our Vertue grows heavy, and our Devotion cold, under these indulgent circumstances of our fortune, we have more need to beg, that God would use a severer method, and bring us, like *Naaman*, to a sense of Religion, tho it be thro a sense of Pain.

'Tis thus that God adopts his Children, and nurtures those whom he pleases to call his Friends ; as for his Enemies, he gives them up to their own devices, and their own desires ; a Portion in this World is all they ask, and since 'tis all they are like to have, so indulgent a Father is God, even to his most reprobate Prodigal Sons, that he divides unto them that Portion which they request, and leaves them to
their

their own disposal; their false and sinful hopes, he feeds with false deceitful joys, and gives them their hearts desire, but sends leanness withal into their souls.

Since therefore Prosperity often proves the occasion of a great Man's fall, and Adversity always turns to a good Man's advantage, we must needs confess, that we have little reason to envy *Naaman's* Prosperity, but less to pity his Disease.

And now to Conclude, let us seriously consider which we had rather choose, *Naaman's* Disease, or *Naaman's* Idolatry, for unto this issue the whole Controversie is now to be brought; and if we have not reason enough of our own to make a prudent choice, but our vicious affections, our sloathful lusts, incline us to the easie part, how great a blessing is it, that God in his Mercy chuses better for us, that he utterly extinguishes those pleasures which stand in the way of our Religion, and tears the Idol with pain and violence from our hearts.

As for us, we are desirous to live at ease, to enjoy the health of our Body, and the use of all our Parts; and rather
than

than be depriv'd of what is so dear unto us, we are willing to run the hazard of our ruine : The delicacy of our lives has made us so averse from trouble, so impatient of contradiction, that to avoid a little present Pain, we put our selves in danger of eternal Torments.

'Tis an irksome thing to resist an evil habit, and when Prosperity has accustomed us to a sinful course of life, our sin is like to continue, as long as our Prosperity remains, and whilst the same bait is still before us, 'tis apt to raise the same appetite within us. We are loath to disturb the current of our life, when it runs smooth and easie; unwilling to check our motion, when our way lies pleasant and broad before us; and if we can but go cleverly down hill all the way, we never think of the bottomless pit in which it ends. 'Tis a hateful thing to stop our course, a contradiction to our nature to return, and 'tis more grievous to climb up the hill again, than it was pleasant to run it down.

So dangerous is the condition of a prosperous Man, and so difficult is his Cure, that upon a survey of the whole matter, who

who would not be glad to compound for a Leprosie, and give all that he has, even his skin in to the bargain, to save his Soul. And now if we would see *Naaman* truly Great, and completely Happy, we must look upon him, not as commanding the *Syrian* Host, but as waiting at *Elisha's* Door; there that God, who had respect to his former enterprizes, and *and by him had given deliverance unto* his Country, shew'd himself unto him with a kinder aspect, and wrought a greater deliverance upon his own Soul.

There is nothing but Religion that is truly Honourable, nothing but the favour of God that can make us Great, and whosoever humbles himself with Piety and Devotion before the Lord his Maker, is in a much higher station, a much happier State, than he that flourishes in a peaceful Court, or leads a Victorious Army.

JOHN

JOHN I. 47.

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him,
and saith of him, Behold an Is-
raelite indeed in whom is no
Guile.*

ALL Scripture, says St. Paul, was
given by the Inspiration of
God, and is proper for the in-
struction of Man: And that
nothing might be wanting
that is proper to instruct us, we find there
not only perfect Rules and Precepts of li-
ving well, but we see also those Pre-
cepts drawn out to the Life, and recom-
mended to our imitation in most amia-
ble examples. [These are the most pre-
vailing Arguments, the most likely mo-
tives to work upon us, by shewing us
that Vertue is not only a commendable
but a practicable thing; and there is
B b no

no commendable quality in Man, but what the History of the Bible gives us some remarkable example of.

Amongst the rest, we have a glorious instance of *sincerity* in my Text, upon which our Saviour has bestow'd a most remarkable affectionate commendation: And sincerity is doubtless a most excellent Vertue, a most eminent Grace, and never the less an accomplishment though it is not very fashionable in our times.

Indeed, through the gross corruption of our age, it is now grown into disuse, and look'd upon as a meer antiquated Vertue: But yet, like a noble building run to decay, if we view it well, we shall find it beautiful even in its ruins, and very worthy to be repair'd: And therefore in order to so good a work, I shall endeavour to shew in my following Discourse.

1. What this Vertue of *sincerity* is, and in what particulars it consists.

2. I shall illustrate these particulars by the example of this Disciple in my Text.

3. I

3. I shall shew wherein the beauty and usefulness of this eminent Vertue lies.

1. A Man of *sincerity*, is one that makes a plain, and open, and constant declaration of the Truth ; whose professions are always agreeable to his purposes, and his Heart and Tongue always go together. One that uses no disguise in his Actions, no deceit in his Words, but whatever signs he makes to express his mind withal, they are exactly suitable to the thing signified.

And therefore Sincerity is the same Vertue which, in other terms, we call simplicity of mind ; a quality which, howsoever despised by ungodly Men, yet is highly recommended to us in the word of God, as the distinguishing Character, and peculiar Temper of the Gospel : and accordingly St. Paul exhorts us, *to beware that the Serpent do not beguile us through his subtlety; and corrupt our minds, from the simplicity which is in Christ.*

Whereby we are given to understand, that this simplicity is a quality which denotes a plain, downright, honest dealing; an open ingenuous singleness of heart, and is set in direct opposition to the turnings and shiftings of the Serpent, the artifices and disguises of double dealing Men. And thus St. Paul calls his Conscience to witness, that he *had Had his conversation in the world, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God.* Now to make up this simplicity and sincerity of heart, there are three ingredients necessarily requir'd, 1. Industry. 2. Honour. And, 3. Conscience.

1. We must be industrious to find out the truth, that our sincerity may have a good Foundation to build upon, and never receive any Opinion, but what a Man according to the best of his understanding, and most deliberate judgment, may answer for. Otherwise, if we are either too negligent in our Search, or too hasty in our Determination, we are never likely to be well inform'd: and then if we embrace an error, 'tis not *simplicity* in a commendable, but an opprobrious Sense; and if we avow it

it too, it is not sincerity but perverseness.

Not that every error makes a Man guilty of insincerity ; for then no mortal Man could ever be sincere : but only such errors and oversights ; as a Man might have prevented, but did not ; such as he had the means and opportunity to correct, but neglected it either for want of inclination, or care. But where all due care is taken, and all humble diligence is us'd to inform our selves aright, there a Man may be mistaken, and yet be sincere: He may err, but shall not be accountable for his error.

Only we must remember by the way, that a Man cannot answer for his Sincerity in this case, unless he is secure of his vertue too. For if Ambition, or Covetousness, or any other Vice, has got the ascendant of his Reason, it will cast such a mist before his Eyes, that he may search, and very nicely too, but shall never find the truth ; and therefore we must first cleanse our Hearts, before we can hope to clear our Heads.

But, 2. Besides a good measure of Industry, and Understanding, to settle his principles and find out the Truth, A Man of sincerity must have a good proportion of Honour to assert it. He must be a Man, not only of an Inquisitive, but an Active Spirit, otherwise the truth will die upon his hands, and every little shock will put him beside his principles.

A Man may know what is Truth, and yet for want of Courage, not have the heart to own it; but sometimes deny it out of fear, and sometimes conceal it in hopes of favour, and like a Cork floating upon the Water, he follows the stream of Popularity, and shifts his course at every turning of the Tide. Whereas a Man that is honourable and sincere, like a well built, well managed Vessel, maintains his course, and stems the Tide: Or if the opposition is so strong that he cannot make his way, at least he is certain to stand his ground. But then,

3. But

3. Before he is capable to do this, he must call in Conscience to his assistance, otherwise his honour is not able to stand alone.

Sometimes Honour is too pliant a principle, that will give way as soon as it is strongly press'd, and the current of the World is too powerful for it to oppose. And here it stands in absolute need of Conscience to support it.

Sometimes again Honour is too stubborn a principle, and will not give way to Truth it self, but makes a Man think himself bound in duty to defend those errors, which he has once espoused. And in this case it stands in great need of Conscience to Correct it.

Indeed at all times Honour is calculated for the eyes of Men, and is apt to take its measures from the multitude; which is a very deceitful guide: But Conscience directs us to the will of God, and gives us a secure dependance upon Heaven, and is the only principle that can preserve us in the Truth, and make us either Honourable or Sincere.

B b 4

And

And now when a Man has Understanding enough to Judge of Truth, and Honour enough to Profess it, and Conscience enough to keep steady to the true Profession, then is he a Man of Sincerity, such as is described in my Text, *An Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.* Then is he fit to be a Disciple of Christ, and to follow him even in the worst of times, and the worse the times are, the more eminent his Sincerity will appear. All which I shall illustrate more particularly from the example of this Disciple in my Text, which was the

2d. Thing propos'd. *And when Jesus saw Nathanael coming, he said, Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.* Our Saviour knew what was in Man, and therefore 'tis no wonder if he declared at first sight what a sort of Man Nathanael was; but that we might know him too, the Evangelist has Recorded some passages of his behaviour, some Marks and Characters by which his Sincerity will easily appear.

As, 1.

As, 1. The first instance of his Sincerity we find in his plain dealing with *Philip* his Friend, when he call'd him to attend our Saviour. For the understanding of which, we must know, that there was at this time a great expectation amongst the *Jews* of the coming of the *Messias*, and mighty advantages they expected from him when he came. Nay, from some intimations which they had received already of our Saviour's Birth, it was commonly thought that he was actually come, and only waited for the day of his Shewing unto the People.

Upon this Critical Conjunction, this Glorious Revolution, 'tis no wonder that all Mens eyes were intent, that their heads were full of the approaching deliverance, and their hearts desirous to make their Court to the *King of Israel*. *Philip* was one of the first that saw him, and thought himself happy in the sight, and, as became the Office of a Friend, he was not satisfied till he introduc'd *Nathanael* to see him too. *We have found,* (says he) *him of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, Come and see.*

But

But *Nathanael* was not so officious a Courtier, nor so Complaisant a Man. He deliberates upon the Proposal, and examines whether the thing be true, or not. From a common Tradition amongst the Jews, he doubts whether *any good can come out of Nazareth*; And from certain information, he knew that the *Messias* was to be born in another place: and therefore he adheres to his own Opinion, notwithstanding his Friends report, and refuses to give up his assent, till he had some better evidence. Tho' he might reasonably expect great thanks, and perhaps, great advantage too, by an early compliance, and a ready submission to his King, yet he would not give up his establish'd Notions upon a bare surmize, nor make a Complement of his Religion.

'Twas very Piously, and very Honourably done; and from this example we may learn, that our Judgment ought not to be sway'd either by Interest, or Favour, or Affection, and Truth must not give way to any motive, but only to an evident Demonstration of clearer Truth.

It

It may be for our Interest perhaps, to go along with the common cry, and comply with a fashionable error; and it may be for our ease, to close in with a prevailing party, and conceal an unreasonable Truth; but 'tis neither for our Honour, nor our Conscience, to be subject to such sordid compliances, and servile dependences upon other Men: A Man of Sincerity disdains to have his reason enslaved, and his Understanding drawn in Triumph by the multitude; and is as far from thinking, as he is from walking in the broad way.

A Man's interest, or his ease, will always depend upon others: But his judgment is his own, and every wise Man will keep it so; and therefore he always suspends his belief, till he has good grounds for the change of his opinion; and in the mean time, tho his judgment may happen to be misled, yet 'tis the commendation of his sincerity, that he maintains no opinion but what he steadfastly believes.

The character which *David* gives of a *Good Man*, is very applicable to this purpose, That *he speaks the truth from his heart*;

heart : And tho the heart of Man is very shallow, and the truth lies very deep, and upon this account 'tis easie for us to be mistaken, yet he that speaks sincerely *from his heart*, is a True Man; tho what he speaks should not happen to be True: In this case, 'tis sufficient for us to speak as we Think, only let us beware to Think before we speak; otherwise, tho we are not guilty of *insincerity*, yet we must be accountable for *idle words*,

Thus the Disciple in my Text was mistaken in his notions, concerning both the Person of the Messiah, and the place of his abode; and after this intimation given him, he still persevered in his mistake, and neither his affection for his old Friend, nor his hopes of advantage from his new Master, could prevail upon him to give his assent one way, when his judgment stood another; neither Friendship nor Courtship, nor any other Motive, but downright conviction, could prevail upon him to contradict his own Sense, and give his Conscience the Lye.

If

If some Men had been in our Saviour's place, they would have call'd this plain dealing an affront, and thought themselves ill us'd: But Christ commended him, and lov'd him for it, and immediately gave him this glorious Testimony. *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* And here we have a

2. Instance of his sincerity, in his behaviour towards Christ himself, whom he treated as plainly as he did his Friend, and in return for his seeming Complement, he very abruptly, and as it should seem, very rudely ask'd him, *How knowest thou me?* So many good words, and so fair a commendation as our Saviour bestow'd upon him, were enough to mollifie another Man, and make him tractable: We are all apt to be attentive to our own Praises, and believe every report that is made of our own Deserts; there is such a Charm in this Musick, as opens our ears, and makes an easie passage to our Souls.

But this Disciple, tho he was a sincere Man, and had no guile himself, yet he was a Wise Man too, and unwilling to be
be-

guil'd by others. He knew the common Artifice, of commending those into our Party whom we cannot Confute; and suspected there might be some design in this extraordinary Civility, some Fraud intended by that plausible Character, and his sincerity set a watch upon his Judgment, that he might not be impos'd upon. Therefore instead of complying with our Saviour, and returning thanks for his Civility, he put this uncourtly, unfriendly question to him, *How knowest thou me?*

A Man of sincerity, such as this Disciple was, desires nothing more than to be known: And yet he could not conceive how Christ should know him at such a distance, and pretend to characterize him at first sight; and therefore by this question, he does in a manner rebuke our Saviour's hasty judgment, who seems to be as much too forward in his determination, as he himself was too deliberate in his.

And here in humane probability all hopes of *Nathanael's* discipleship were lost: After he had been so kindly call'd by his Friend, and so courteously receiv'd
by

by our Saviour, and yet stood off in such a resty suspense, as look'd little better than a rude denial, how could he expect to have any farther offer made him? So Man would think, but our Saviour was of another mind: He approv'd this Reservedness, this Cautiousness, this Tenaciousness of his Temper, and from thence concluded him fit to make a Disciple of.

He knew that a Man of so settled Principles, so sedate a Spirit, might possibly be mis-inform'd, but could not easily be seduc'd, and for that reason was worth gaining to his side. He loves a Man that is steady to that Cause which he has espous'd, and will not be perswaded, till he is convinc'd; and therefore to convince him, he gave him an undeniable proof of his Divinity, that he was indeed the searcher of Hearts, and knew what he did, and what he thought, in his greatest privacy and retirement. *Before Philip call'd thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee,* says Christ.

This

This was so clear an Evidence, as could no longer be resisted : so plain a demonstration, as could not be deny'd, and upon this he freely gives up his assent, and declares himself a Convert. *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.* Where we have

A third Instance of his sincerity, that he made all his former prejudices and prepossessions give way, as soon as the Truth appear'd, and after he was convinc'd, he was very easie to be perswaded.

As some are so soft, that they will yield to your opinion, before they are confuted ; so others are so hard, that tho' they are confuted, yet they will not yield tho' the errour be so visible, that they may see it, and so palpable, that they may feel it too, yet *they will not deliver their soul, nor say is there not a lye in my right hand,* but resolve to live and die in that persuasion, in which they happen to be born and bred.

Now

Now this is insincerity in the other extreme, and is the more dangerous, and the more reproachful of the two: This is not steddiness, but stubbornness of heart, that stands not only in a direct Opposition; but in a perfect Defiance of the Truth; a vicious humour that must be totally subdu'd, before we can have any possibility of being instructed.

This is such perverseness as a sincere Man can never be guilty of; and accordingly we see, with what readiness this Disciple quits all his former Notions, to embrace the Truth, and with what chearfulness he makes his profession; how fast the Christian Faith grew upon his hands, and to what a glorious height it rose: *Rabbi; thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.*

Thus a Man of sincerity grows like a hardy Oak; first he takes deep root downward, before he begins to shoot; and then in this equal poise, he is proof against all Storms, and in no danger of being rooted up. But a Man that is unsincere, in either of the extremes, if he is too hard of belief, he does stand in-
E c deed,

deed, like a Rock, but never rises higher; or if he is too ealie, he sprouts up, like a Bramble, but never stands his Ground.

Thus I have set before you an example of Sincerity, as it stands upon Record in the Gospel. Indeed it were heartily to be wish'd, that we had more living examples of this Vertue, and need not be driven back to the ancient times, to take pattern from thence for our imitation. But alas, we are sunk into the very dregs of the World, where all Vertues run very low; and of all Vertues, Sincerity is most out of date.

Neither Honour, nor Conscience, nor Truth, can have their due effect upon us, and we can hardly be perswaded to be faithful either to our God, our Neighbour, or our selves: Instead of an open ingenuous Conversation, we live all in disguise, and converse upon the Reserve, and like Men that are conscious of their own insincerity, we dare not venture our own thoughts abroad.

Instead

Instead of giving friendly advice, and kindly assistance to other Men, Undermining and Over-reaching, Ensnaring and Betraying, are become the great business of the World, and he is accounted the truest *Israelite* who has the most of Guile. *Hei mihi qualis erat!* what a strange alteration a few Ages, I may say, a few Years have made amongst us. But instead of complaining of the badness of the Times, let us endeavour to make them better: and in order to it, let Us consider in the

3. Place, how excellent a Vertue this Sincerity is, and wherein the usefulness of it consists: And here we shall find it of singular use and advantage to us,
1. In regard to our Happiness in this World; and 2. with respect to our eternal Happiness in the World to come.
And,

1. Sincerity is a Vertue of great use and advantage to us in this present World; and that whether we consider our Honour, or Interest, the two things which worldly Men are always tender of:

C c 2

1. In

1. In point of Honour : what is there in the World that lays a greater blemish upon us, than the suspicion of Insincerity ; or what more detestable Character can be given of Man, than that of being Deceitful and Un sincere ; of making professions one way, when his intentions lie another ; and covering his foul purposes, with fair pretences ; which, how plausibly soever it may be done, yet is it no better than a plain downright lye.

And a lye is, in the universal opinion of the world, so reproachful a thing, that tho many Men are apt to tell it, yet no Man can endure to be told of it again : Tho his Conscience makes no scruple of the thing, yet his Honour cannot brook the Word : 'Tis such a reflection as he thinks justifies the severest revenge : And yet I fear 'tis the familiarity of the practice that makes the reflection so intolerable, 'tis the sense of their guilt that makes them so afraid of the discovery.

But

But a Man of Honour detests both the name and the thing: he scorns to live in a disguise, and harbours no thoughts which require to be conceal'd: If they are honest, 'tis his glory to divulge them: If they are dishonest, 'tis his study to correct them: But to dissemble them, and keep them close, is to cherish a generation of Vipers in his bosom, which will eat their way through at last, and not only torment him, but expose him too. For tho' all vice is hateful, yet no vice is so shameful, as Dissimulation; and a detected Hypocrite is the most contemptible Man alive, a most vile, prostitute, abject Creature.

Truth is the great Prerogative of Humane Nature, the natural endowment of a rational Soul; and all the faculties of our Soul were made on purpose to be employ'd about it: Our Understanding was given us to no other end but to apprehend it, and our Wills were made inclinable to search it out; our Memories were put into us to preserve it, and lay it up, and our Speech was bestow'd upon us on purpose to publish it, and lay it out again.

These are the great Ornaments and Accomplishments of Man, that give him the Preeminence of all other Creatures ; and by excelling in these Accomplishments it is, that one Man has the Preeminence of another : But he that shews so little regard to Truth, as to make that give way to any other inferior aim, debases his Soul, and depraves all his Noble Faculties ; and as he is degenerated below the nature, so he does not deserve the name of Man.

In a word, there is nothing so dishonourable, as for a Man to be swaid by Covetousness, or Cowardice, or any other paultry Morive, to deny his own Principles, to contradict his own Reason, and give himself the lye, But

7. As our Honour, so our Interest also engages us to be Sincere, to profess the Truth, and nothing but the Truth, and make that the only standard both of our Words and Deeds : Without this there is no Commerce, no Communication to be had ; but the whole World would become a Wilderness, and Man the most dangerous Beast of Prey.

Where

Where there is no sincerity, what Trust, what Confidence can we put in Man? And where there is no Confidence, there can be no Conversation: In such a case Society is but a Snare, and Banishment would not be our Condemnation, but our Choice: Our only refuge against a faithless race of Men, who neither act as they speak, nor speak as they think.

Of all humane blessings there is none so useful or delightful to Mankind, as Friendship, 'tis the ornament of our prosperity, and our comfort in distress; 'tis a guide to us in all our difficulties, and a Companion in all our ways; a kindly relish to all our Enjoyments, and a relief to all our Wants. In short, it is the very salt that gives the favour to all our other Blessings.

But without Sincerity all these conveniences moulder away, and fall to the ground, like a tottering house without a Foundation; for, where Vertue and Truth are wanting, there is no ground to build a Friendship and Confidence upon: There is no trusting to such a Mans

assistance, no depending upon his advice, but with all his fawning promises, and flattering looks, he designs only to draw poor credulous Men into a snare.

'Tis this that has destroyed Society, and turn'd Conversation into Stratagem and Design. • Instead of that kindness, and chearfulness, and openness of heart, with which Men use to meet together, we have nothing now but a little Civility, a great deal of Formality, and all Reserve. For Men to come together upon the strength of these qualifications, is much worse than keeping at a distance: Such a false feigned Complaisance, is more dangerous than an open downright defiance, as a Spy is more dangerous than a professed Enemy; for the Enemy gives warning before he strikes, and bids us prepare for our defence; but the Spy comes with Artifice and Subtlety, to circumvent us: With fair pretences he gets within us, and then gives the fatal, the unavoidable Wound. With Words as sweet as Honey, and as soft as Oyl, he spoils us into our ruin, and betrays us with a countenance as smiling as Heaven, and as false as Hell.

'Tis

'Tis pity but these Men, who delight in such disguises, had been born with Vizards upon their face, that they might be detested and avoided too, and not admitted into Conversation, to be the bane of Friendship, and ruin of Society. 'Tis great pity that so excellent a Faculty as Speech, should be thrown away upon them, who apply it to so ill a purpose, so unnatural an end, as not to discover, but conceal their thoughts.

It was once look'd upon as a most contemptible Character, which an Ancient Comedian gave of a fawning *Parasite*, *Ais, aio*; *Negas, Nego*. Do you affirm a thing, so do I; Do you deny it, so do I; and that so dextrously, that he could affirm, and deny the same thing in the same breath. But this Character, how scandalous soever it was in those generous Heathen times, is now looked upon as a Principal Accomplishment amongst Us, and the *Parasite* would be esteem'd the most Civiliz'd Person in all the Company.

Such

Such is the improvement of manners in our Age, so fashionable, but withal, so pestilent a thing is flattery. If a Man is running himself upon a Precipice, 'tis a rudeness to hold him in: If he is going fait and softly into a Gaol, 'tis ill breeding to keep him out: If he is engag'd in some desperate Adventure, 'tis ill policy to forewarn him: If he is involv'd in some dangerous mistake, 'tis Moroseness to correct him: And, if we can but please, we never care to profit those with whom we converse. Thus merely for want of Sincerity and Truth, Friendship is almost banish'd the World, and all the benefits of Conversation lost. But this is not all: For,

3. Besides the prejudice which it does us in point of Interest, and Honour, it endangers our Religion too, and makes us more unfit for the next World, than we are for this. For we must not think that Conversation was instituted only for our Convenience upon Earth, but to qualifie us for a Nobler, and more refin'd Conversation in Heaven: And accordingly Friendship was always esteem'd the highest pitch of Vertue by
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the Philosophers, and a principal point of Religion by the Divines. 'Tis doing glory to God in the most pleasing way, and setting off the Beauty of his Creation to the best advantage.

'Tis the very end for which God did create us, and send us into this World, that by the improvement of our sociable Vertues here, we might be train'd up, and fitted for a more perfect Society, and a higher Station hereafter. Nay 'tis the end, not only of our Creation, but our Redemption too; that we should *give glory to God, by shewing good will towards men*. But how can this be done by Men, who make it their business, not to *shew*, but *conceal* their intentions, and disguise their thoughts, and have no *good will* to any but themselves. What place can there be in the bright spacious regions of Heaven, for such a dark, fordid, contracted Soul?

But besides that this want of Sincerity incapacitates us from discharging one of the noblest Exercises of Religion, we shall find that it has a fatal influence upon Religion it self, and tends directly to the ruin of our Faith; which we commonly

monly, and properly call our Profession, to shew that it ought to be Ingenuous, and Sincere. But this vile custom of prevaricating with Men, teaches us to dissemble with God himself; and he that is false to the one, is never true to the other: But will be practising his Art upon all whom he has to do with.

And accordingly I shall instance in some scandalous practices, that are too common in our times, some unsincere dealings in point of Religion, that were unknown in former Ages, and can only be attributed to that gross insincerity which prevails in our common Conversation. This, I am sensible, is an ungrateful Subject: And I am sorry there are such Subjects to speak upon. But sincerity is my theme, and whilst I am recommending the practice of it to others, I must not be guilty of the breach of it my self; I must not be afraid of censuring those flagrant Vices, which the more Patrons they have, the more need they have to be expos'd: And therefore,

1. To the shame of our Age it must be said, that there is a sort of Men amongst us, and those very numerous too, who

who are always ready to profess that Religion which is uppermost, and court that Party which prevails, and *follow the multitude to the house of God*: As if not God, but Man was the Author and Founder of their Faith, and their Churches were made, like their Weather-Cocks, to alter with every Fashion, and turn with every Wind.

Had *Philip* call'd to one of these Men, as he did to *Nathanael* in my Text, and said, *we have found him of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote*, He would have rais'd no question upon the case, but follow'd his Interest, and his Friend, tho *Moses and the Prophets* had call'd him the quite contrary way. Nay if another Man had cry'd unto him, *lo here is Christ*, and a third Man said *lo there*, he would have complemented them all by turns, and left them again in time, as easily as he found them.

Now this is great Insincerity towards God, and Treachery to his Religion, 'tis pretending to be guided by his Word, but never consulting his Word which way they ought to go: This is not speaking as they Think, for, God knows, they speak, but never Think at all. But,

2. There

2. There is another sort of Men amongst us, who think quite contrary to what they Speak, and profess one Religion, but wish well to another; who always hold Communion in our Churches, and yet hold a confederacy with them who are for pulling our Churches down: And to disguise this insincerity of their hearts, they call it by the plausible name of Moderation. They are for our discipline forsooth! and allow it to be good, but are not so highly, so zealously concern'd for the support of it, as some other Men.

And why are they not so highly, and zealously concern'd for the best constituted Church in the World? Why do they shew such indifference, where the cause of God and Religion is at stake? Why are they so *unreasonably moderate* in our defence, and yet joyn interests with them, who endeavour our ruine without either *reason*, or *moderation*. Surely this moderation, which they would pass upon us for a Verrue, is nothing but that *lukewarmness* which God rebuk'd in the *Laodiceans* as a scandalous Vice, and for which he threatn'd to *spue them out*. Rev. 3. 16.

Our

Our Saviour profess'd, and was not ashamed to own it, that *the zeal of God's house had eaten him up* : But these Men are ashamed to own that they have any zeal for God's House at all : Oh for a little of *Nathanael's Sincerity*, to cure them of their guile, and make them *Israelites indeed*. He would not play thus fast and loose, between *Moses* and the *Messias*, nor quit his obedience to the Law, till upon good grounds he was made a Convert to the Gospel ; and when that was done, he prov'd as steady a Profelyte to the Gospel, as he had been a true Disciple of the Law. But,

3. Before I conclude this point, I cannot, I must not omit another infamous instance of insincerity, that is commonly practis'd in our age, but was never thought of in the world before : And that is, of Men who live in open enmity to our Religion, and an avow'd separation from our Church, and yet come creeping to our Altars, to qualify them for an Employment in the State.

Is this their Conscience! Is this their Honour! can there be any pretence, either to Religion, or to Sincerity in this? Oh for a little of our Saviours Zeal, to *Scourge these buyers and sellers out of the Temple*: Who dare to prostitute so venerable an Ordinance, to so vile an end; and profane the Holy Altar first, in hopes to buy it, or to sell it after.

But this instance, tho it is too notorious to be omitted, yet it is too scandalous to be insisted on: And therefore I shall only say of this, as well as of all the rest, that a Man's ignorance is to be pity'd, and his Errours may be excus'd, but Insincerity is a detestable unpardonable thing: 'Tis an utter enemy to all Reason, and all Religion too, but more especially, 'tis the very reverse of a Christian Disciple, a direct contradiction to the simplicity of the Gospel; which as it was grounded upon the plain naked Truth, so it was propagated, and supported too, by the Sincerity of its Professors; without Violence, without Artifice, and without Disguise.

Our

Our Blessed Saviour was the perfect Pattern of all Vertues, but yet no Vertue shone so bright in his Conversation; as Sincerity: with what plainness of expression, and openness of heart, did he rebuke Vice, tho never so triumphant, and encourage Vertue, however disesteem'd: With what indignation did he always treat a governing presuming Pharisee, and with what compassion would he embrace an humble despised sinner: As his Heart mov'd him, so his Mouth always spoke, and gave free utterance to all his resentments. Thus he liv'd himself, and thus he taught us to live; to converse upon earth, as the Blessed do in Heaven, where they see into one anothers thoughts, and the Language of their Souls is not Heard, but Read.

Here indeed our spirits are cover'd with a veil of Flesh, a tenement of Clay, that shrouds our Thoughts, and makes our Conversation more doubtful and obscure: But yet even here God has made as it were a Window into our Heart, and left one passage open, and therefore a good Man will not deserve, and a wise

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Man would not desire to have it shut, and would no more falsifie his countenance, than he would break his word: But is open and ingenuous in all his expressions, because his intentions are all Just and True: And such a heart, the plainer we see it, the more we shall admire it, and say with our Saviour in my Text, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.*

God grant that we may all be such, that Truth may preside in our hearts, and Sincerity may direct our Conversation, and then the God of Truth, who is our Witness, will be also our reward.

J O B XXVII. 5, 6.

Till I die I will not remove my Integrity from me, my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go, my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.

WHEN Job's Fortunes were reduc'd, and left him nothing in the World but only a few false Friends to add to his Afflictions, whereof one urg'd him to renounce his Religion, and the rest would have perswaded him that he had no Religion to renounce; he still found one good Friend within him, which was his Conscience, and that, he was sure, would make him another Friend, which was his God: And if God and his own

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Conscience took his part, he knew they would support his Spirits, however his Flesh was mortifi'd, and set him above all the strokes of Fortune, and all the malignant Tongues of Men. And therefore this comfortable Inmate, this Bosom Friend, he resolved never to discard, but to nourish it, and cherish it, as he would do himself. *Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me, my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go, my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.*

In discoursing upon which Words, I shall shew

1. What this *Integrity* is, which *Job* makes profession of in my Text.

2. What those Afflictions were, which brought his Integrity in danger.

3. I shall prove that these Afflictions are no reason for a Good man to *remove his Integrity*. But,

4. That

4. That they are a good reason why a Wise Man should *hold fast his Integrity, and never let it go.*

Upon these points I shall speak plainly, and practically, and in order.

And, 1. Of the first. By Integrity is meant, a constant unalterable regard to those principles of Morality and Religion, which are either imprinted in us by Nature, or revealed to us by the Word of God. 'Tis that God-like faculty in the minds of Men, whereby we are enabled to establish our Vertue, and stand firm to our resolutions, and not suffer our selves to be put By our duty, by any Temptations which the Devil, or his Agents can lay before us.

It teaches us to maintain a constant course throughout our life, and to pursue our proper end by direct and steady motions, and not to turn aside to the right hand, or the left, either thro' the sensual hopes of Pleasure, or the servile fear of Pain: But to have our minds fix'd, and intent upon our main substan-

tial Good, without attending to those baits of the Devil, whereby he feeds the hopes, but destroys the happiness of the Wicked and Unwise. That we should maintain the dignity of our Souls, and bear up our Spirits above the petty allurements of this World; neither prostituting our Conscience to advance our Fortunes, nor purchasing our Pleasure at the expence of Truth.

And this is not only the Duty, but the Glory of a Man, first to fix in himself Good resolutions, and then to make his resolutions Good; not tamely to renounce those principles in our Actions, which in our Judgments we have espoused, nor cowardly to desert that Cause, which we have no motives to forsake, but such as a Judicious Man would be ashamed to own; such as the Devil may thank him, but his own Heart will reproach him for.

Constancy, and Courage, are both the Ornament and Defence of Man; they are a Shield of Safety in his Hand, and a Crown of Glory upon his Head: Without which there is no Beauty in our Actions, and no Honour in our Life,
and

and a Man void of Integrity, is of less Understanding, and less Esteem, than the Beasts that perish. God has plac'd Them low in the order of his Creatures, and it is their commendation, that they give Honour to God, and do service to Man, in their appointed station, and their proper place : But an Inconstant, Yielding, Complying Man, debases his own Nature, and degrades Himself, and follows such a loose abandon'd course of Life, as makes him utterly unserviceable both to God and Man.

Indeed, Integrity is the highest Accomplishments of our Nature, or rather it is a Composition of all Accomplishments in one ; 'tis adhering to our whole Duty, without omission of any part ; and persisting in our whole Duty, without intermission of any time ; and regulating all motions according to the dictates of our uncorrupted Reason, and the declar'd will of God.

And to preserve our selves in this Integrity, we must be very careful not to commit any oversight in our Conduct, nor betray any weakness in our Progress, nor forsake the direct paths of
Dd 4 Vertue,

Vertue, tho' there appears a *Lyon in the way*: That we suffer not our Religion to truckle to our Lusts, nor Vanity to usurp upon our Reason.

That we be not byass'd by Hopes, or Fears, or any idle Passion, to break the rules of Equity, or commit any Unworthy Act; but so behave our selves, as Men that have a Good Conscience for their Witness, and God himself for their Guide: depending upon his Word for their Warrant, and trusting his Providence for their Success. Whatever discouragements our Obedience lies under, yet still we must Obey, and still Believe, and leave the issue to the disposal of him that gave us the Command.

This is what we mean by a Man of Integrity; a Man that is immoveable in his Vertue, and unalterable in his Religion, and stands firm as a Rock, tho' all the World be in an Uproar round about him: whom neither Prosperity nor Adversity can oppress; neither Solicitations nor Threatnings can disturb; but whatever attempts are made upon him, he scorns to shew the least Compliance that

that shall either dishonour his God, or wound his own Soul: Will suffer no breach to be made upon his Vertue, no disorder to deface the Beauty of his Actions, nothing to discompose the regular, the equal, the uniform tenour of his Life.

And yet how usual a thing is it, to see the Lives of some Men made up, like a beggarly Garment, of divers Colours, and incoherent parts: Some threads of Piety here and there, some shining scraps of Vertue, but several patches of Vice, and Deformity intermix'd: Sometimes most vehemently Devout, and at other times as notoriously Profane, with such a medly of Good and Evil, as makes an unnatural frightful shew.

But a wise Man desires that His life, like the seamless Coat of Christ, should be all consistent, and of a piece, all beautiful, and compact; and considers, that the foulness and fordidness of one part, is not amended, but expos'd by the fairness of another: And therefore he labours to preserve it without blemish, and without rent; that is, he labours

to preserve it in its integrity, as knowing that this is the only habit that can do him Credit, and Service too: The only habit that is fit for the Soul of Man. Such was the integrity of the righteous Job, so close and fast he held it: *I put on righteousness and it clothed me, my judgment was as a robe and diadem.* And now.

2. The next thing to be considered is, the afflictions which befell this Righteous Man, and the Temptations which brought his Integrity in danger: And here it must be confess'd, that the Temptations were very pressing, and the danger very great.

1. To be reduc'd, as he wasto the extremity of want, and see his whole Estate fall a prey into his Enemies hands, is of its self a heavy Curse; and we, by our impatience, commonly make it heavier than it is: When our flesh is pinch'd with hunger, our spirit is subject to repine, and they that invade our Possessions, in danger our Vertue too. When our Goods, as we call them, are taken from us, we must have a great stock of Piety to supply their place, and good store of Patience

ence to preserve our temper, and our Soul can very hardly sustain its self, when we want the necessary sustenance of our Body.

But if Poverty, of its self, is so hard to bear, how much more grievous is it to fall, like *Job*, from the height of Plenty, into the extremity of Distress, where all our former enjoyments serve only to aggravate the Misery, and increase the sense of our present wants. This inequality of Fortune, these hidden mysterious ways of Providence, to be carri'd, like a Vessel in a Storm, in one moment from the Heaven above to the Deep below, was enough to discourage the virtue, and turn the brains, even of a steady conscientious Man, and make him say, as *David* sometimes did, *Then have I cleans'd my heart in vain, and wash'd my hands in innocency.*

But the greatest aggravation of *Job's* misfortunes was, that they came so thick upon him, and still one fatal messenger arriv'd, before the others tale wastold. This must needs overwhelm him with the variety of his ruine, and give him not time to recollect his Virtue

tue. So sudden, and so great a weight, who could undergo? So many, and so severe rebukes, and those without intermission too, nothing but the implacable malice of Satan could suggest, and nothing but the invincible courage of a Saint could bear. *And yet in all this Job sinned not, nor charg'd God foolishly.* And therefore,

2. When the Devil found this method unsuccessful, and *Job's* integrity was not lessen'd by the loss of his Estate, the next attempt he made was upon his Body: not doubting but that sharp affliction would touch him to the quick, and make the most obstinate Patience give way.

Riches are but a covering to the Body, and therefore may easily be parted with: But our Body is the covering of our Soul, and every stress upon it reaches the very Soul, and touches it in a tender part. *Touch but his bone and his flesh,* said the tempter, *and he will curse thee to thy face.*

Men may pretend, by the strength of Reason, and the help of Philosophy, to make themselves insensible, to take
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pleasure under the torments of a disease, and dispute themselves into temper upon the rack ; but the truth is, these perplexing distorting Arguments do as great violence to the Soul of Man, as the rack does unto the Body, and put it to as real pain. When nature is so furiously assaulted, it will cry out, and shew regret. Whether the Body be the Covering, or the Consort of the Soul, yet they are so closely link'd together, that the one must bear a part in the others misery : And when they are troubled, 'tis some relief and satisfaction to Complain.

And accordingly we find *Job* himself, the great example of Patience, the very standard of all passive vertues, when the Devil had *made large furrows upon his back*, and harrafs'd his flesh with noisome sores, tho he did not curse his God, yet he detested his life, and curs'd the day of his Nativity, and was in so violent a commotion, that it did indeed put him beside his temper : Yet still *his integrity he held fast*.

And therefore, 3. the Devil try'd another stratagem, and finding him self baffled

fled in the assault he made upon *Job's* Body, he employs his nearest Relations and dearest Friends to make an attempt upon his Soul. Accordingly, one tells him that his Miseries are more than he deserv'd, and then why should he preserve his Integrity any longer. Another tells him that he deserves all these Miseries, and more, and 'tis only for want of Integrity that they fell upon him. One tempts him to revile his God, and another to revile himself; and all conspire to lay such a load of reproach upon him, as was enough to make another Man asham'd of his Religion, and weary of his Life.

And what could be more grievous, after the enemy had bruis'd his Flesh, and made it all as one continued sore, than for these pretended Friends, with *their precious balms to break his head?* what can be more inhumane, than thus to *persecute a soul whom God has wounded,* and like the Devil, to delight in driving the Arrow still deeper into his Heart?

For God to chastise our sins, and inflict punishments upon us, is but the necessary dispensation of his Justice, and we must abide it: Nay, 'tis an instance
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of his Mercy too, which we ought to be thankful for. But for sinful Men to usurp upon us, and make themselves the Interpreters of God's Judgments, the Judges, and Executioners too of God's displeasure, is as intolerable, as it is unjust: For them to act in confederacy with the Devil, whetting their malicious tongues against us, and taking advantage of our fall to trample us under foot, is such a contradiction to our nature, as requires the whole Patience of *Job* to bear.

And yet all this he bore with a religious Courage, and unshaken resolution, and *held fast his integrity*, when he had nothing left besides.

A heart so tender, so broken, and bruised like his, must needs be in danger of losing those principles which were stamp'd upon it, and liable to receive worse Impressions. But tho his Soul was in a ferment, and all his passions mov'd, yet neither his Anger, nor his Sorrow, neither his Hope, nor Fear, could move him to any base compliance, either to renounce his Religion, or deny his God: No nor all the riches of the East

East, not all his own substance and flocks again. He had try'd, and known the strength of both, and was able to make a just Computation, which was of greatest value. And from his experience we may learn, that if our Integrity is but as great as *Job's*, that alone will support us under all our Distresses, tho they also should be as great as His.

Thus we have consider'd the Calamities, which beset the righteous *Job*, and brought his Religion in danger of being overcome : As also the Integrity, which supported his Religion under these Calamities, and made him *more than Conqueror*. Here we see, by a most memorable Example, how liable all Worldly Goods are to forsake us, and that nothing but the Divine Accomplishments, the Heavenly qualities of our Mind, are able to hold us up. .

And now, how can we chuse but bewail, and condemn our own folly, for mistaking our Happiness, and making so false a Judgment of our own Affairs : The great concern we shew for a few inconsiderable outward Blessings, without any regard to the inward Peace and
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Tranquility of our Mind : The vast esteem we have for those things which perhaps we can never get, but for certain we can never keep ; and our unreasonable indifference towards those Divine Perfections, which will never leave us till we die, and the happy effects thereof remain even after death.

We commonly lay the foundation of our Happiness upon Riches, and build our hopes upon the plentifulness of our Fortune ; and that our Fortunes may be answerable to our Desires, we lay the foundation both deep and wide : When God knows, all this while, we do but build upon the Sand, a frail and groundless Tenement, and after all the pains and cost bestow'd upon it, one blast of the Devil's Malice, or God's Displeasure, throws it down.

To prevent this, we fortifie our Riches with the number of our Friends, and think our houses and our selves secure, under the Protection of a strong Alliance, and a Numerous Party ; till at last, to the great discomfort of our Souls, we find that both Fortune, and Friends, come and go together, and they who
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are reconcil'd to our Prosperity, will be so far from relieving our Distress, that they only add to our Disappointment.

By such unexpected Revolutions, and turns as these, God corrects our folly, and teaches us to make a wiser choice; not to lade all our Treasures upon one uncertain bottom, but to settle them upon such a lasting foundation, as shall make us at once both Happy and Secure.

Had Job valued himself upon the largeness of his Estate, or depended upon the number of his Friends, who had been a more miserable abandon'd Man than he? But having chosen Vertue for his Portion, and God for his Defence, We find him Triumphant in the midst of his Afflictions, and despising both the Outrage of his Enemies, and the reproaches of his Friends, and defying the power of the Devil himself. *Till I die I will not remove my Integrity from me, my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.*

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'Twas very wisely, and very generously resolv'd; and indeed it is such a resolution as every Good Man would make, and every Great Man may defend; and in spite of all mischances, will *hold fast his Integrity*, and keep steady to his Religion. And to prove this was the

Third thing propos'd. And here let us take a review of *Job's Afflictions*, and upon second thoughts, we shall find there is no reason why they should startle the Faith, or shock the Resolution of a Wise, and Upright Man: But tho' the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, are all Confederate against him, yet in the strength of his Religion, he will break the Confederacy, and defeat them all.

If his Body is Afflicted with some painful Distemper, or some noisome Sore, it is but what Bodies are made subject to: But why should we therefore wound our own Soul, and so make an intolerable Curse of that, which God designed only for a seasonable Affliction?

If our Body is apt to be affected with pain, and touch'd, at every stroke, with a sense of its Mortality; yet our Soul is above it, 'tis a Divine substance of it self, an invulnerable Immortal Principle, a separate exalted Being, with peculiar Rights and Prerogatives of its own; and tho' it has a Conjunction, yet it has no Dependence upon the Earthy part.

If our Friends ungratefully renounce us, yet why should we renounce our Religion for it, and revenge our selves upon our God, and so prove Guilty of a greater Ingratitude our selves, than that which we condemn in others; Why should we *Curse God and die*, because perhaps we live in trouble, when with a little Patience, we may probably live at ease, and with God's blessing we shall certainly live for evermore.

If our Friends forsake us, or what is worse, stand by us only to upbraid our Misfortunes, and reproach our Names, and pour Vinegar instead of Oyl into our Wounds; yet if *our heart does not reproach us too*, we have the greatest
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Comfort left, and a Comfort which is in our own power to keep; a sure Friend, that will neither flatter us in Prosperity, nor forsake us in Distress; by whose Assistance, we may be Confident in the greatest Dangers, and Easy under the greatest Pains: And shall we forsake this only Faithfull Companion of our Misfortunes, to make us still more Unfortunate? What is this, but Conspiring with the Tempter against Our selves, and executing that Malice upon our own Heads, which the Devil designs, but cannot effect, and our Enemies have hitherto attempted it in vain.

If an Enemy has invaded our possessions, 'tis no wonder, and therefore should be no surprize. But what need we lay our Conscience open too, and suffer that to be invaded: why should we be influenci'd by such covetous fordid principles, as when our Worldly Goods are lost, to throw our Religion after?

He that places all his happiness, and all his hopes, upon the uncertain Enjoyments of this World, is a very bad Philosopher, and a much worse Di-

vine. But he that builds his Fortunes upon the ruins of his Faith, and puts his Conscience to sale for the procuring of a livelihood, is an Enemy to all Reason, and a scandal to all Religion.

Our Saviour commands us, *to seek first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and then all these things shall be added to us.* But there is another Gospel now in use, which instructs us to secure *all these things* first, and put *God's Kingdom* to the venture : Not to forego a present Pleasure, or a present Gain, in hopes of a distant uncertain happiness ; but since we must depend upon the Providence of God, for either the one, or the other, there are those who think it best to provide for themselves in this World, and trust his Goodness for the next.

And is this the Faith of a Christian ? Was it worth our Saviour's while to come down and die for this, that we might live like *Jews, upon the fat of the Land*, and glut our selves with Milk and Hony ; that we should Profane his Religion, and prostitute his Church, and prefer the sweat of our sinful Brows before the purchase of his precious Blood ?
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Is a Christians Birth-right of no more value than to be sold for a Mess of Potage? Surely that Man must have renounced his Reason, who puts so low a price upon his Religion.

If Divine truth, and saving knowledge were to be bought, what wise Man would not be the Purchaser, tho' it were at the expence of his dearest Blood. But to sell it, is to sell our own Soul, and to lose by the bargain, tho' the whole World were given us in exchange.

The sum of all is this : Whatever Calamity befalls us, whether it be upon our Body, our Reputation, or Estate, we must consider, that it comes from the hand of that God who made us, and best knows what is proper for us, and then what reason have we to repine?

If the Calamity does lie heavy also upon our Soul, yet is it heavier than our Sins which caus'd it; whom then should we repine at but our selves?

If we could say, like *Job*, That our Calamity is greater than our Sins Deserve; yet can we pretend to deserve God's kindness too; Why then, as *Job* very well infers, should we think to receive good at the hands of God, and yet not endure to receive the evil?

The life of Man in this World is naturally subject to great variety, 'tis a troublefome Passage through an uneven Way; where, for the exercise of our Vertue, and the Tryal of our Faith, God has appointed many intricate turnings, and many steep ascents: But Patience overcomes them all, and Perseverance will carry us to the top of our Hopes, the perfection of our Happiness; where we may enjoy our selves in Peace, and look down with Pleasure upon the difficulties which we have surmounted.

In these Exercises, or Trials, or Misfortunes, as we call them, every Man living has his share: And he that has the fewest is commonly the most Unhappy. Why then should these outward untoward accidents endanger our Integrity,

ty, or shake our Vertue, which by the help of our Vertue we may easily undergo, and by the help of our Integrity we may quickly overcome. In a word, without Patience there is no living in the World, and with Patience, no life can be Unhappy. And therefore

Lastly, Afflictions are so far from being a reasonable cause to *renounce our Integrity*, that they themselves are the great reason why we should *hold it fast*. And certainly, when we have but one Comfort left, we have the more need to keep that secure, and not add to our own Calamities. When the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, are all engag'd in an open Enmity against us, then is the time for our Conscience to be our Friend : 'Tis then that our Vertue stands us in the greatest stead, when it stands alone : 'Tis then only that Beauty and Efficacy is seen, when is stripp'd of all outward Garniture, and left to defend^d it self.

When our Fortune, and Friends have left us, then God takes us up ; and shews

shews that the Soul of Man, which is his Image, a substance of Divine Extraction, is above all humane Violence, and stands in no need of humane help. 'Tis prov'd by the fire of Affliction, and Opposition not only try's, but improves its strength. The Rocks and Sands, are both equally stiddy in a Calm, but 'tis a storm that shews the difference: And he that can lift up his head above the raging waves, shews himself to be founded upon the Rock.

This is the Integrity, this is the Glory of a Man, to stand the shock of Calamities, to and unshaken in the day of Tryal; and he that has fixed his Hopes and Confidence in Heaven, he that has chosen Truth for his foundation, and God for his support, may look down with scorn upon the possessions of this World, and with pity may see the Invader more Unhappy in the Enjoyment of his Estate, than he himself is in its loss.

His Life indeed is exposed to Violence, but still his Goods are out of danger: for to him alone Death is no evil; and *till he dies*, his Integrity, which is his choicest

choicest Good, can never be remov'd. 'Tis above the Temptations of this lower World, belongs to another, a higher Sphere, and can no more be mov'd by these little revolutions upon Earth, than Heaven can be shaken by a storm, or the firmament be remov'd by an Earthquake.

He that does no Violence to himself, can suffer none from Others; for Vertue and Honour are his defence, and God above is his Protection; and as long as our Integrity retains them on our side, we can desire no greater blessings, we can need no better guards. Here we may enjoy our selves in the midst of all our looses, and however Fortune may have streighten'd us abroad, yet in our own Souls, at home, we have a spacious field, sufficient to exercise our Vertue, and supply us with content.

He whose Conscience is clean, and his mind uncorrupted, can never want an agreeable diversion, a suitable Entertainment; 'tis the greatest satisfaction, and the noblest prospect under Heaven, to reflect upon our selves, and find no stain upon our Integrity, no blemish upon our Soul,

Soul, nothing to convince us that we have done amiss, and nothing that we could wish to be undone.

Therefore, as we value our own Happiness, as we regard our own Souls, so let us be careful to preserve our Integrity, without which, all our Happiness is but a Dream, an Imagination, and our very Soul will be but a burden, and terror to us. Let us but secure our selves from Doing evil, and then to be sure we can Suffer none.

Let us keep strictly to the Laws of our Religion, and walk boldly in the ways of Truth, and though the way be something rugged, yet it will lead us to Honour, and Happiness, and Eternal Life. But if we turn aside, either to the right hand or the left, if the love of Pleasure diverts us from the Rules of our Religion, or the fear of danger affrights us from the ways of Truth, we shall quickly find our Pleasure vanish'd, our Dangers increas'd, and our selves undone: For without Integrity there can be no Content, and without Content what shall we be the better for all our Riches, or even for Life it self: What satisfaction of mind can we have
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in those Goods, for which *our hearts reproach us*?

And if our own hearts reproach us, what Man will not be ready to do so too? Who then would blemish his Honour to purchase an Estate? What a contradiction is it, to procure our Plenty by such means as must bring us into Contempt, when Contempt is the only thing that makes Poverty it self a burden?

And if Honour is such a sacred thing, as a wise Man would not part with for any temporal advantage; how much more contemptible are they, who throw away their Conscience also in to the bargain, and renounce both Equity and Truth, to secure a paultry Interest.

Conscience is a nice and tender thing, and at every little Misdemeanor, takes offence: and therefore it must be treated with tenderness and care. For when 'tis once wounded, it is not all the Riches in the World can Cure it, and all the charms of the World can never keep it quiet. It is so faithful a Witness, so skilful a Judge, as can neither be deceived by Sophistry, nor brib'd with Gold; though all the
World

World should flatter us, and cry, *Peace, Peace*, yet there can be no Peace when our Conscience is disturb'd.

And as its sentence is Just, so also 'tis severe : Like the rebukes of an offended, enraged Friend, it strikes deep into our Souls, and searches to the very quick, and has so powerful an influence upon us, that there is no concealing of our shame, nor preventing of our Torment. Tho the sin is acted in the dark, yet the justice of God most commonly brings these hidden things to light, and for want of other evidence, the Conscious Man seldom fails to betray himself : Like *Cain*, he bears his guilt written in his Face, and the mark of his treachery sits so fast upon him, that *to be a fugitive and a vagabond*, is not his Punishment, but his Reprieve.

Since therefore our Heart is so nice, and ready to reproach us, who would give it so gross a provocation ? Who would have recourse to Violence, and Treachery, for his present support, when the time is coming, that these very supporters will be our ruin ; will betray us to shame and torment before we die, and to Eternal misery after Death ? Then at
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the farthest, we shall pay dear for the injustice we have done, and our Covetousness will be confuted with a Vengeance, then our own Violence will be executed upon us, and with all our deceit, we shall find that we have only deceived our selves.

How much better is it, to stand Corrected by these seasonable admonitions, and be convinc'd in time ; To be righteous in all our designs, and moderate in all our prosecutions, and contented with that issue which God sees fittest for us. Not to measure our wants by our fantastical desires, but to limit our desires according to our real Wants. To lay up a treasure of Good Works, instead of Riches, and look upon Innocency to be the truest Honour; and then, tho' we are destitute of outward Goods, yet in the Mercy of God, and the Integrity of our own Heart, we shall find a sufficient supply.

Such was the Integrity of the Patient *Job*; though the Devil had depriv'd him of his Estate, yet he was so far from addressing to the Devil for restitution, that he would not do an undecent thing, either to express his resentment, or to get relief

relief: tho he was left naked as he was born, yet he resolv'd to continue as harmleſs too, and would not be Guilty of any profane unlawful action, to ſecure his Intereſt, or what was dearer to him, his Life it ſelf. *Tho' he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him: Tho' all the World beſides has left me, Yet my Integrity I hold faſt and will not let it go: Though my miſchievous Enemies, and my miſtaken Friends reproach me, Yet my Heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live.*

F I N I S.

